

XXVII. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Christ’s Call to Be On Mission – On Message – In Ministry”
Matthew 28:16–20
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
September 22, 2019 • Morning Sermon

We will start by looking at two passages of Scripture, one in Matthew 28 and one that we looked at in the last study, Luke 14:34–35. In Luke 14 we looked at three parables about the banquet of salvation and the instructions of the Lord on the call to the discipleship. This is how this chapter ends. This is God’s Word. Luke 14:34–35 says [34] “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? [35] It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Now Matthew 28:16–20 which says [16] *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. [18] 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.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I had asked for prayer about this sermon and I’m so grateful I did because I think this sermon is crucial and yes I think every one of them to some degree is crucial but this in particular. This subject matter from God’s Word, I think, is absolutely crucial and essential. If we don’t understand and embrace what will be covered in this study, in five to ten years there will not be a Briarwood Presbyterian Church. If our denomination doesn’t embrace this then the same thing will happen to the PCA or at least in the way you know the PCA. The same goes for the Evangelical church in this nation, as you know it. That is how important I think this is. I am not speaking in hyperbole but speaking from my heart and if you think I’m wrong when I’m through then come and challenge me, but if I’m right then come along with me.

The church of Jesus Christ cannot save you but it is here to serve a very specific mission for the Savior. The church exists for the purpose of gathering and perfecting the elect of God until He returns. That is the church’s purpose and mission. Were the writers of the Westminster Confession accurate? More importantly, is it Biblical? What would the Bible say to us about it? This is why I have spent two years on a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. It’s why we are here as a church. We have many blessed effects of being Christ’s church but our mission is evangelism and discipleship. Why would I say that, what does it mean and what are its implications? I’ll explain this in this study.

In the last two studies we looked at three banquet parables about salvation being a banquet of grace. This was to teach us Christ’s call to tell the church to embrace compelling evangelism. This is what we found out from Luke 14:1–24. God saves those who need Him even though they do not want Him, by pursuing them with a compelling message that has been entrusted to the church. It’s called the Gospel. He has done it through compelling messengers which are converted believers, Christ’s disciples, who go to seek and save the lost and disciple them. He does it also through the compelling Minister which is the Holy Spirit.

Luke then affirms what Jesus always does which is that Jesus never separates evangelism and discipleship. Jesus tells us to come as we are and don't come negotiating. We are to come surrendered. Then Luke gets to Christ's call to costly discipleship which is to renounce everything including yourself. Galatians 2:20 says *[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

As He begins to work in your life by the means of grace through discipleship He will send you back to all those relationships and things but not in idolatry or with any temptation in idolatry but as an ambassador into those relationships and things. Those things have no prior commitment over you. When Jesus taught this at another time there and it came time to follow Him three men gave excuses and each excuse whether valid or invalid started with 'but first.' When we come to Christ, Jesus is not at the top of our list of our life for He is the list and our life. As we follow Him He makes our list and we go into that list with Christ as our life to bring Christ to those who are in our lives with everything He has entrusted to us in our life. Nothing is before Him, above Him or beside Him. I am your life for you are Mine and I am yours.

The result of this is that we become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. You now serve Him in every arena, institution, relationship and dynamic of life as we go in the preeminence of Christ into every single area, but if the salt isn't salty you might as well throw it out for it's not even good for the manure pile or the side of the road. The salt has to be salty and if it is it makes a difference. I can vouch for that and that is what the church is supposed to do – keep the salt salty and the light lit so that the salty believer with the Light can salt the earth as they go into the world.

You can't grow in Christ and be effective to the full extent He has given you without being engaged in a church that is committed to its mission, message and ministry. I know this because I've been a pastor for over 40 years now. I have seen the people who have walked away from the faith and have never finished strong. You might think 'they just weren't walking with Jesus' but that is not how it started. They didn't walk with Jesus because they found a lot of reasons not to walk with Jesus in His church. They walked away from the means of grace, fellowship, the sacraments, and out from under discipleship and it all came with reasonable excuses as they said 'but first...'

I know this because it was in my family. I have said this before but I was saved out of a drug problem where I 'drug' to church every Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday night. I went college, got married and saw my mom and dad eventually divorce and get disconnected from the Lord. They didn't start there but I remember when it started. It started when the Lord's Day became an option, gathered worship became an elective, being in a small group and Bible study was only if they had time and then the love of the Lord began to wane. Then came a divorce but praise God I had the great privilege to see them come back to the Lord and see them remarried and have great days. If you could have asked them if they could get those 15 years back they would say 'yes.' They told me where it all started. It didn't start with 'I don't love Jesus' but when all the means of grace began to be pushed aside. God made His church to grow you.

I want to be a church where people grow and that means we have to be a church on mission, on message and in ministry. We have to do what God says we're called to do and not something else. We can only do what God says we are to do in the power of the Holy Spirit out of a love to Christ and being guided by His Word. What and how does it look like to be on

mission, on message and in ministry? We find this in Matthew 28. I'd like to present this text again.

Matthew 28:16–20 says [16] *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. [18] 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."*

We don't know if this was the mountain where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount or where the transfiguration occurred but it was a designated area because it was referred to as 'the mountain and not a mountain. The Disciples get engaged as they meet with Jesus. In the previous study we said salvation is free but discipleship costs. God says that His church is here to put the flavor in the salt and to keep the Light lit. The means of grace – preaching, prayer, fellowship, sacraments, etc. – with the direction He has given us through His message, mission and ministries help us carry out His mission. Jesus puts this Great Commission rightly here but Matthew 28 is not the only Great Commission text.

The Great Commission is so important it is repeated five times in the Bible. It is in all four of the Gospels plus the book of Acts. When you put all five together you get a composition of the Great Commission but none of them are more salient than Matthew 28 which is why it gets preached more often. It is a definitive statement of what the church is supposed to do. Who gave it? It is the Jesus who is the Head, Builder and Architect of the church. He indwells the church with His presence and His Spirit. He guides the church by His infallible and inerrant Word. He bought the church at the cross.

Ephesians 5:25–27 says [25] *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* Here is His church. Jesus we are yours so what are we here for? This is why He gives the Great Commission which is foundational, all encompassing, clear, challenging and it has been given to us so let's go a little deeper into it.

Who does He give the Great Commission to? He gives it to the eleven Disciples, the 12th is dead for he had apostatized. I love the honesty of the Bible here because we see in Matthew 28:17 that some doubted even though this was after the resurrection of Jesus and prior to His ascension. He gives the Great Commission at the Mount of Olives, as He is ascending and at the Sea of Galilee. This is the first meeting of the first church planted in the New Testament for when they gathered here with Jesus they worshipped Him (vs 17). As they worshipped Him, not perfectly for the Bible is honest, but intentionally, Jesus gives them the Great Commission. He instructs them as to why He is planting this church and why it is to be here.

Then Jesus gives them a command and it's not to go, even though there are preachers who preach this, this way. The only imperative verb here is to make disciples. This is the first church planted in Israel of every other church that will be planted and they will go from 11, to 120 to 3,000 (just counting the men) to 5,000 and it will go from Antioch to Ephesus and will turn the whole world upside down in less than 25 years but He starts with the eleven as He tells them with this why they are here – they are to making disciples.

In order to make disciples you have to do three things. One is to go which here means as you are going and that's evangelism – intentional, personal, and compelling. Secondly,

sacramentally enfold them into the body of Christ. We see throughout the New Testament 22 baptisms of believers and their households which have been sacramentally enfolded into the body of Christ to be loved on and love others. Thirdly, is to start teaching, don't stop because He wants us to teach everything in His Word as He says 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'

You start with the foundation which is the Gospel. Paul says I Corinthians 15:3–4, *[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.* That means there are other things that are of secondary importance but they are still important. This means you have to get the Gospel right in order for the other things to make sense. Church government is important but you can get this wrong and still be saved. We want to understand how the Scripture unfolds but as II Timothy 3:16–17 says *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* So start with the Gospel and then begin to move with this focused discipleship into their life.

So now we see the church worshipping, evangelizing, loving, enfolding, sacraments, preaching, praying and discipling. You can't make a disciple without evangelism. You have to go get them. You don't clean fish before you catch them so just go catch them. Then we start cleaning them which is called discipleship. We are to be fishers of men and we fish everywhere. It's everyone evangelizing everybody everywhere every day. Then as they come to Christ we grow in grace. You can't grow in grace before you come to Christ. Turn from everything in repentance, put your trust in Christ and we'll show you how to live your life as Jesus is your life. That is discipleship and we do that in the womb of His church. So as you enfold them then you start equipping.

What is the salient mark of successful discipleship in a church that is on mission, on message and in ministry? The salient mark of success is that sinners who are falling short of God's glory now their greatest delight is to give glory and worship. What is the one case of perfect discipleship? Who is the best disciple that ever lived? It was Jesus and He taught His Disciples for three years. He sought to seek and save the lost. After the resurrection when He got His Disciples together the first thing they did was worshipped and that's how you know you have hit a homerun. First base is evangelism, second base is enfolding, third base is equipping and a home run is worshippers, who are no longer idolaters for they are giving God praise in spirit and in truth. We worship the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit – Trinitarian worship.

As we take a closer look at this Great Commission the word 'all' is used four times. How much authority does Jesus have? It's the first thing He says in Matthew 28:18, 'All authority have been given to Me...' What if the Mayor of New York says you can't evangelize in Central Park? I have a King who says I can. You then go to jail but I must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). The mayor's authority is only because of Him. I'll obey the mayor's authority and give glory to God unless the mayor's authority tells me that I have to transgress the Word of God. Just like Peter and John who were told not to preach in a certain place but they do and they were willing to go back to jail for it. Give me the key and I'll start a prison ministry. In other words, there aren't really any closed countries if we're willing to die for King Jesus.

Matthew 28:18–20 says *[18] 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.”*

Secondly, go to all the nations. Don't stop with just your nation but go to all the nations. Thirdly, is you teach them to observe all that He has commanded, the whole Word of God which is inspired, infallible, inerrant and profitable. The fourth all is that He will be with us all the days of your life until He comes to get you. The mission is to stay at it until He returns and He will be with us every day by His Spirit.

I have prayed about this for months and I want to give you 7 takeaways of being on mission, on message and in ministry. The first one is discipleship and evangelism is the Christ-given mission of the Church which defines and directs every ministry of the Church from Christ's ascension until His return. In other words, if a ministry doesn't do this then we don't do it at Briarwood. In some way the church has to do evangelism and discipleship done because that is what we're here to do. This is business and as my dad would say 'Take care of business.'

The second takeaway is the mission of the Church is narrow and focused. Hear me out on this. We don't exist to be the political party in the United States or any other nation. We don't exist to do hospitals or a lot of other things but the church is here to equip Christians. This part of our mission statement here at Briarwood for our mission is for God's glory, we are committed to equipping Christians to worship God and to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. Right now probably many of you are turning me off but read what I have to say on these takeaways.

The third takeaway is the mission of a Christian is broad and comprehensive – 'salt and light of the world.' How broad? I Corinthians 10:31 says [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or **whatever** you do, do all to the glory of God.* Micah 6:8 says [8] *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* This is not natural for us. Men and women won't do this unless they get evangelized and discipled. That's what we do here at Briarwood. Here at the church we're making the salt salty so that it can be sent to unto the earth and to be the light unto the world.

The fourth takeaway is if the Church does not stay committed to its mission (narrow), then Christians will not be able to do theirs (comprehensive). It's by the Church staying focused that you're able to do all of that as salt of the earth. I love salt and if it's salty it doesn't take much salt to make a difference. I think my wife makes the best corn on the cob and my mouth is watering just thinking about it. What makes corn on the cob so good? It's salt and butter. Now, I don't ever remember going to my wife and saying 'that was the best salt and butter I've ever had in my life.' No, it's when the salt does its work that it becomes glorious.

It changes a marriage, a family, a community and everything because it's present. When we do our job in the church then it shows up in the marriage relationship, as parents, in their business, in school, etc. They know how to do business when they do their work heartily unto the Lord and it's because they were discipled. It shows up in ministry. Let's see what we can do at a college. Let's see about putting 400 people in tutoring the downtown schools. Now the church isn't a tutoring agency but here is an example when an 80 year old retired FBI director who was discipled said 'here's a way for me to impact the world' and he started this tutoring ministry.

Will our church teach on the sanctity of life, the sanctity of marriage, sexuality and family? Absolutely. Are we living in a world that is saying to the church and the family, 'we are going to eradicate you'? If you think the church can exist compromised to the world then you

will celebrate what they celebrate or be condemned. You have to condemn what you used to celebrate to exist. So when we say 'no' we're going to be faithful to Jesus. We are going to come with the truth, mercy and love of Christ in marriage, family, gender dysphoria, etc. and not with the psychology of the world.

When we did our sanctity of life Sunday we had lawyers, doctors and nurses for life standing up in the front with us. You know you're doing something right when this happens. We have legislative policies for the sanctity of life. We have ministries like Sav-A-Life, Crisis Pregnancy Center and Lifeline Adoption Agency. At our church we have nine ministries for the sanctity of life and seven have been started by Briarwood members. The church didn't start it but what we did was disciple those who did to teach them and then they said 'here's a ministry, let's go for it.' A Christian's mission is all encompassing and God will put burdens on different people at different places. How do you bring the Gospel on this issues to contend for the faith without being contentious? We certainly don't do it perfectly but that's just a small example. The Church has to relentlessly discipline itself for mission integrity. Don't get distracted. Stay on the mission.

The fifth takeaway is the functional mission of the Church will inevitably define the message of the Church. Our confessional mission is on target but in the life and ministry of the Church the question is, does the functional mission line up with the confessional mission? Are you really on mission, message and in ministry? If you're not on mission it's only a matter of time until you will get off message because the functional mission will define the message eventually.

If we decide that Briarwood exists for church growth then we'll end up with a pragmatic gospel to get the numbers. Watch what we do to the message to get the numbers. We'll eventually get rid of that scandal that everyone can't stand and that's the Gospel. Then the Gospel will be lost. If we decide that the functional message is to turn out successful Christians then we'll end up starting a prosperity gospel. If it's self-esteem we'll start a therapy gospel. If we decide on social justice then we'll come up with a social gospel. I have a family vested interest in social justice, racial reconciliation and all but I know the best way for us to impact that is for us to stay on mission and on message. Then watch what believers do when they're equipped and they see the stupidity of believing in Darwinian racists and racism. That is burden of mine.

The sixth takeaway is gathered worship is the ground from which an evangelistic and disciple making Church grows, as well as the evidence of success. If we don't understand God-centered, Trinitarian worship we will not be an evangelistic and discipling church. When Jesus gave the command they were worshipping. The mission was delivered in the context of a worship service in Matthew 28. When God's people love gathered worship, not only does gathered worship scatter them after they have gathered in the discipling process and evangelism, but it also becomes their testimony. I know good small group discipleship is going on when those in the small group love those in the large group of worship, otherwise it's pretty close to a cult.

The seventh takeaway is the discipleship funnel. This is one that is big on my heart. When people are won to Christ they are put into the top of the funnel, the big gathered group and then they work down the funnel, being matured to follow Christ. If you don't love the top of the funnel you'll never get to the bottom of the funnel and if you get to the bottom of the funnel it will be connected from the top. Jesus has this example for us. He had the multitude, the 70, the 12 and 3. Gathered worship is the large group. Out of the congregational community (Sunday

school) come the small groups and you may get to a smaller one of three for more accountability and discipleship.

As something glorious happens in the big group there is the cannonade of discipleship. I get cannonaded singing at times in the large group gathered worship. I just wanted to stop and go to heaven right then. There is something about doing that with one heart, one voice and one soul in the gathered worship. It's not the same in a small group. When we get together with God's people lifting up praise to Him with a confession of truth together it's amazing. Then I get into the congregational communities and other dimensions are added. In a small group comes another dimension of interaction with openness and transparency. Then I get into a group of three and now I'm in the funnel and I am functioning my way through it. We didn't event this for we're just following what Jesus did. I'm pleading with the Lord that God will not only give you a heart to get in the funnel but be part of the funnel as God helps us stay on message, on mission and in ministry.

I have so many illustrations of this but I don't have time to give you all of them. There are 121 ministries at Briarwood and I could have gone to every one of them to show you the glorious effects. I want church growth, racial reconciliation, social justice, etc. but it's a consequence of the church staying on mission and not a mission. I long for and desire Christians who are not only contributing to statistical growth, bring the gospel of reconciliation and wiping out the stupidity of this culture's Marxist theories such as intersectionality, critical race theory, etc., but I know they won't be there if we're not discipling them. I want you to have a good self-esteem but I want that to be a product of knowing Jesus as your life. I'd like for you to be successful and tithe, even double tithe but my goal isn't how many zeroes are in your bank account, but that you know how to work heartily for the Lord. I want to win you to Christ, disciple you and then you become a part of doing that.

I do want to share with you about this one ministry because I just experienced it. I taught for the second time at our ministry cohort at Bloody Bibb and thinking 'why am I here behind the wire?' When I finished there was a black guy and white guy who held hands and prayed together. How did I get here? It started with a man named Jeff Dunn who got together with prison in North Carolina and prisons weren't the same. Then he found out this ministry started in the worst prison in America named Angola with a seminary and a church. Then it went to South Carolina and then Alabama. He came to us and our session said 'yes' we'll partner with you and we did it through Birmingham Theological Seminary. This was in 2016.

We are now in our second cohort and have 12 graduates and we'll soon to have 20 plus graduates. I know you might be thinking these prisoners want to go through this because they want to get parole. No, the men in this are ones who are in for life. Between the two men I mentioned earlier who were praying together they have 13 homicides. They are never getting out. Once they graduate in that and go through our Jumpstart program they are committed to going to another prison to reproduce it – salt and light.

When we started it all these men were in this one bay area and they were being sexually assaulted because of their commitment to Christ and their involvement in our seminary. All kinds of things were happening to them but they loved each other and they loved their enemies. Then they asked for a church there to match what they were learning in their seminary. One of our congregational communities meets there and one of our guys went down there to preach. They call it The Church Behind the Wire. The dorm they are meeting in used to assault the students and now almost the whole dorm is in the church, 120.

I'm going to clean this story up for the sake of this study, but if you had walked in there with me in 2016 the guards called that dorm Fallujah, which means war torn. You would have literally seen guys with needles saying 'I'll be with you in a minute, finish it.' There would have been instruments of murder all over the place. There was mayhem and violence of all races. You would have sheets being let down to cover the perversion and immorality that went on. There was pornography everywhere. That same dorm has been raided with no warning in the last year and a half and nothing has been found – no pornography, no sex toys, no drugs, no weapons. There are blacks and whites living together, studying together, worshipping together, built a library together and sharing bunks. It has been unbelievable to see.

I can now walk through there with my wife and no even bat an eye. Remember the white and black guys who were praying together? The white man had tattoos all over his body and used to be the head of a top Alabama gang and the last time he murdered someone he was put into isolation. I asked him how he was converted. When he would go out for his daily walk a black man would say 'I have three words for you' and you can imagine what those were. He would respond back 'I have three words for you' and when he finally shut up the black guy said 'Jesus loves you.' You can only imagine what he said next. The black then said 'I have three more words for you' and when he finished another round of blasphemy the black man said 'I forgive you.' He went back to his room and his sister had just brought a Bible to him. Long story short he becomes a Christian and now they're holding hands in our seminary, praying together. That's what the Lord is doing. There are some Alabama prisons that are begging us to reproduce this ministry at their prisons.

The reason Jeff Dunn came to us was that he had come to Briarwood in the 1970s and became a Christian and was discipled with Campus Outreach and Frank Barker the head preacher at Briarwood at the time. He told us 'If you will do in the prisons what you did for me I would be grateful. Come on and I'll help.' We did. In Alabama prisons right now the residualism is 87 percent. In other words, when 100 get out 87 go of them go back in. In our Jumpstart program it is only 6 percent. That is the Gospel. We didn't go in there for racial reconciliation but that happened. We went in there for evangelism and discipleship teaching the whole counsel of God and that shows the stupidity of this. We didn't go in there for drug rehabilitation or for sexual immorality eradication but it happened because God did that in their life and now they build libraries, change sleeping arrangements and hold themselves accountable. It is because we stay on message, on mission and in ministry. Let's bow in prayer.

Prayer:

If you are reading this today and you don't know Him I ask you to come just as you are. You don't have to clean up because praise God He will clean you up. Just come from your sin and give your trust to Jesus. We exist to love you in Christ and if you would like to pray with someone please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd be happy to pray with you. We want to help you come to Christ and follow Christ. For those of you who do know Him agree with me as I pray God, keep us on message, on mission and in ministry. Be done with the superficial view of Christ's church. See its mission, its message and when we get on mission and on message we unleash Christians with a comprehensive world shaking message, mission and ministry. Help us. Let's do this together with a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship, in Jesus' Name, God I ask You and plead with You, for ten years from now we want to be salt and light and nobody comes back to tell us anything about the salt for they just love what it does

wherever it goes. We want to be light so that darkness is dispelled and that means we need to be on message, on mission and in ministry. Please God help us, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

CHRIST'S CALL TO COMPELLING EVANGELISM

God saves those who need Him even though they do not want Him, by pursuing them with a compelling message, messengers and a minister.

CHRIST'S CALL TO COSTLY DISCIPLESHIP

Salvation is free but Discipleship costs.

AN OVERVIEW

A CLOSER VIEW

LIFE TAKEAWAY

1. Discipleship and Evangelism is the Christ-given Mission of the Church, which defines and directs every ministry of the Church from Christ's Ascension until His Return.
2. The Mission of the Church is narrow and focused.
3. The Mission of a Christian is broad and comprehensive—"salt and light of the world."
4. If the church does not stay committed to its mission (narrow), then Christians will not be able to do theirs (comprehensive).
5. The functional mission of the Church will inevitably define the message of the Church.
6. Gathered Worship is the ground from which an evangelistic and disciple-making Church grows, as well as the evidence of success.
7. The Discipleship Funnel. {note}ing Church grows, as well as the evidence of success.