

Global Ministries Conference 2021
Mission in Biblical Perspective—Found Faithful
“Our Stewardship of the Mission, Message and Ministry of World Missions”
Matthew 28:16–20
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February 28, 2021 • Sunday Morning Sermon

We will be looking at two texts of Scripture for this study but to start we'll look at Matthew 28. There is something I want to draw from this text that is very important as we come to our faith promise Sunday for World Missions. We end our conference with a Communion service celebrating with all our ethnic and international congregations. 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.”*

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

I do want to thank all those involved with our World Missions Conference and all the adjustments they have had to make due to the current pandemic we are in. Many of the missionaries that would normally attend could not leave their countries and some who came couldn't get back so we had to have meetings over ZOOM. We do thank the Lord we could do ZOOM but I will be so glad when we won't have to use that anymore. So why is that Briarwood has a National Missions Conference where we focus of fulfilling the Great Commission in our Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria – our Birmingham, Alabama, Southeast and North America? Then we have our World Missions Conference where we focus on our 240 plus missionaries that are out around the world in cross cultural missions through all the nations of the world. The reason we have these conferences that focus on fulfilling the Great Commission is because Jesus tells us to do that.

This church has basically had the same mission statement for 60 plus years. That mission statement comes from various Scriptures in the Bible. It comes from Matthew 28, Luke 24 and other verses and this is our Christ-given mission. Then He has given us the message which is to teach and preach the whole counsel of God. So we have distilled this Great Commission and the Great Commandment into a purpose statement which says; For God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians who worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. So our focus is to extend it beyond our language barriers to send it out beyond that to all of the world to those whom God has called, gifted and tested as sent ones as cross cultural missionaries. This is why we do this Global missions conference.

When I was a kid growing up there was a television program called Mission Impossible and the star of the show was a man named Peter Graves. Tom Cruise couldn't carry his globe awards and that's how great Peter Graves was. The program always started off this way; this is your mission if you choose to accept it. We don't have such a mission. We may not embrace it or engage in it but we do not determine the mission of Briarwood or of Christians or other Bible believing churches, for Jesus does that. Here is a statement I have put together to guide us on

this – We who inherit the Gospel blessings from the cross of Christ, have also inherited the Gospel mission and message from the crown of Christ.

Some of you may be searching, some the Lord may be drawing you, but you have never yet made a personal commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior. This God of glory has given His Son to go to a cross to take away all the sins of all of His people and therefore in Him you can be forgiven but more than that He gives you His righteousness so that you can have everlasting life. You are not only forgiven but you are accepted in the beloved. If you haven't done this you can inherit eternal life, you cannot earn this. If you could have earned it God wouldn't have sent His Son. He would have just told you to do better. We are helpless and hopeless which is the bad news but the Good News is that what we couldn't do God did through His Son Jesus so if you by repentance will turn from your sin to Jesus and put your trust in Him by faith. Then this risen Savior will give you eternal life and you inherit a new heart – you're born again. You inherit a new record – you're justified. You are right before God. You inherit a new family – you're adopted. You inherit a new perspective – you have eyes to see and ears to hear. You inherit a new life where you can grow in His grace. You also inherit a new home where you will be with Him and He has gone to prepare a place for you.

If you know Him you inherit those Gospel blessings but you also inherit a mission and a message whereby the mission is to take that message to people who need hear that Good News. We have not only been given that mission to take the message where we are now but also to the whole world. The church is supposed to be like the waves that happen when a rock is skipped in a lake, it's the ripples that go out from the source. The Gospel is sent forth and impacts where we live as it overflows into the state, into the nation and then to all the world. That is what our mission is that God has given to us to accomplish that.

How does He give the mission? You get the blessings for what Jesus did for you on the cross and all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth for He is King of Kings. Our mission came from Jesus enthroned as He ascended and now we are to go to all the nations by the authority given by Christ to us. He now gives us authority and goes with us to the end of the age so we accomplish that mission and proclaim that message. We do the missions conference so we can focus periodically what we are to be doing 365 days out of the year. We are on mission, on message and in ministry.

There are three areas that we bring attention to during this conference and season of faith promise giving. One is how you can engage personally as you are apart of Christ's church. Two is how you can engage prayerfully and three is how you can engage financially. Over 50 percent of what is given through the tithe and faith promise at Briarwood goes beyond Briarwood to church planting, church revitalization, mercy ministry, benevolence, evangelism and discipleship. So in this study I want to share why we have faith promise giving and why we focus on these three areas. As I've already stated Jesus gave us this mission and message from the throne and this is not what Briarwood came up with. We don't edit our mission because it came from His Word and we don't edit His Word.

Revelation 22:18–19 says *[18] I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, [19] and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.* (Also Galatians 1:9) We don't change our mission because it comes from Jesus through His Word and we can't edit the message. We need to embrace it and found faithful with the mission and the

message. Our theme for this year is lifestyle stewardship and what is required of a steward? They are to be found faithful.

So how can we be faithful? The way you can be faithful in cross cultural missions is to send the Gospel out to the world by engaging financially, personally and prayerfully. This is what the Bible tells us on how to do it. A great case study on this was given to us by our guest pastor who spoke at our mission's conference. When the Gospel had gone from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and then it jumped into Europe at a place called Philippi which is where he gave us the backstory – a story behind the story. There are some dots to connect.

I want to illustrate it this way. I have had the privilege to pray with people who have given their life to Jesus. Not one time in my entire life that when I have prayed with someone to receive Christ that, that was the first time they had heard about Jesus. There had been a mother, a grandfather, an uncle, aunt, campus colleague or friend, etc. that they had already heard about Jesus from. In other words, when someone comes to Christ and you get the chance to harvest the fruit to the glory of God, someone else had planted, somebody had watered. Evangelism is a process, it is not an event. Conversion is a Divinely engaged event where people come from death unto life but bringing Christ to them and them to Christ is a process where sometimes you're planting, watering or cultivating. People become Christians by the grace of God and there are others that God has used to help bring them to Christ. There is a context, a backstory of what has happened in their life to bring them to Christ.

What is true about Christians is also true about churches. Any church that is Bible believing Christian church that has been planted didn't come out on its own. Other churches were engaged in giving birth to that church. Let's look at this a bit closer and take on the church at Philippi. That church came into existence because Paul and his mission's team went over the Adriatic Sea, landed in Europe and started preaching the Gospel in this Roman colony called Philippi. A Philippian jailer was converted. What if right now it became against the law for you to be here worshipping Jesus. First of all, I wonder who would still come to worship. Secondly, when the police arrested you and took you away how would you look at the policeman? Paul would have looked at him not as an adversary but a potential citizen of the Kingdom of God. When Paul was in prison and the earthquake came and knocked everything down, what did Paul say? Paul told them not to kill themselves because he had been evangelizing them. He was on a mission and had a message.

Somebody had been on a mission when Paul was in opposition to Christ. Paul wants to go after others the way people went after him. So, Paul is on a mission, with his message while he is in ministry and he is engaged. Paul's team included Silas, Timothy, Luke and each of them came from other churches. The reason Paul is there is because there was a church where he was the associate pastor under a man named Barnabas and that church had sent him and Barnabas out on what is known as the first missionary journey. They planted churches in Lystra, Derby and all those areas. They come back and Antioch sent Paul on another missionary journey again. Paul came back and had a little furlough and then was sent out on a third missionary journey where he went to the churches he planted on the first missionary journey and picked up Silas, Timothy and Luke. All those churches had been planted because Antioch had sent them. Again, any faithful Christian church that exists, exists because they have received from other churches. People gave personally, financially and prayerfully to get that church in place.

How did Antioch come into existence? The church at Jerusalem sent up Barnabas and some of its members of the persecution. The church at Antioch came into existence because of

the church at Jerusalem. I loved the part in Acts where it says ‘you shall be My witnesses (beginning) in Jerusalem...’ and I’m so glad it didn’t say ‘ending in Jerusalem.’ We wouldn’t be here if it said ending. So, it started in Jerusalem and went to Antioch. Then from Antioch there were two missionary journeys and then over to Europe and Philippi. It won’t stop there because Philippi is going to send Paul and his team to Thessalonica, then to Berea, then to Athens and then He sends them to the capital of depravity, Corinth. Don’t miss this.

Philippi was a receiving church and then it became a giving church. Antioch was a receiving church and became a giving church. Briarwood is a receiving church and God calls us to be a giving church. How does a church get to be a giving church? It is not by a program. It is by its people and they give personally, prayerfully and provisionally through resources and finances. People from other churches gave personally. Lois and Eunice gave their son and grandson, Timothy. So, Paul has a teammate, Timothy. Let’s take a closer look at the church in Philippi and see if our faith promise commitment card is appropriate. Let’s look in Philippians 1.

Philippians 1:12–14 says *[12] I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, [13] so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. [14] And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Paul is currently in a Roman imprisonment and while there he is advancing the mission even to the imperial guard. Paul not only saw Philippians jailers but Roman Centurions, not an enemies but as opportunities to populate the Kingdom of God.

Philippians 1:19–21 says *[19] for I know that **through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, [20] as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. [21] For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*** Paul wants to live and die well and that is only done through Christ. Paul wants them to pray for him that he will be found faithful and effective on the mission and on the message. So we not only see the personal engagement but the prayerful engagement. Now let’s look at Philippians 4.

Philippians 4:2–3 says *[2] I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. [3] Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.* Euodia, Syntyche and Clement were all members at the church at Philippi who had been given to personally populate Paul’s team and there are other fellow workers whose names we are not given.

In other words, when Paul came with a team of people made up from other churches, now has people from a church added to his team from one that he planted. The church in Philippi is now a missionary church. It is praying for the world mission. It is giving people to the world mission. That’s not all. Now let’s look further.

Philippians 4:10–20 says *[10] I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. [11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12] I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13] I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

*[14] Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. [15] And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into **partnership with me in giving and receiving**, except you only. (When you realize you have received you also realize it's more blessed to give than to receive.) [16] Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. (They continued to give.) [17] Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.[18] I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. [19] And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [20] To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul is not asking them to give because he wants their gift but he is asking them to give because he wants them to get the reward for giving by becoming a partner in the Great Commission. We also see that Paul mentions another person on his team here – Epaphroditus. But here at Briarwood as we reach our Hallelujah goal we are planting churches right in the capital of the Islamic world – Malaysia. Paul is not asking for himself but for the mission and the message and your opportunity to partner in it. There is the reward.

Every time you see a Christian church you know they are testimony of God's grace and they are trophies of God's grace. Now they are helping other churches to become testimonies and trophies of God's grace. Paul also shows us that a tithe is not an offering here for a tithe belongs to the Lord. We bring God's tithe and our offerings when we give but we see here that this church had gone beyond the tithe for they give an offering that is a fragrant aroma for the cause of supporting the mission work from Philippi through Paul to all of these other churches. God will get to you what gets through you to Him – that's faith promise.

Here is the takeaway. Every true church like every true Christian is a receiving church for we are what we are by the grace of God. I praise God for the other churches who raised up our founding pastor Dr. Frank Barker and for churches who have worked in the lives of others. The man we support who is planting this Malaysia church was discipled under a man who I had the privilege to disciple when I was at the church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Why was I in Charlotte? It was because Briarwood sent me to Charlotte to plant a church in 1983. The tapestry is extraordinary. It is the connecting of dots.

When my granddaddy would stop a service station, before we left we would be related to the guy who was pumping the gas. Can you imagine what it will be like in heaven when we find out the back story of how people came to Christ. Can you imagine all the dots that will get connected there in heaven? So how did this receiving church in Philippi become a giving church? They gave their people—Euodia, Syntyche, Epaphroditus and Clement. They gave their prayers (intercessory) for the advancement of the Gospel and they gave their gifts beyond the tithe, their fragrant offerings for the cause of church planting, Gospel preaching and evangelism and discipleship.

This is the reason we have the three categories on our faith promise cards – because the Bible does it this way. The Bible not only gives us our mission, our message but it gives us our means as to how we accomplish it. Then praise God as it begins to go forth. Perhaps you are wanting suggestions on how to get started with all of this and I'm going to give you some.

Concerning your prayer life take one area where we have missionaries and focus for the year on praying for the missionaries in that area. Or you could focus on praying for the year for the missionaries that came to the conference and then the next year you will pray for another

group. Or you could ask the Lord who He is laying on your heart to prayer for. Or each Sunday we list a missionary from the country of the flag we are displaying in our sanctuary and you could pray for those missionaries for the week.

So how could you get involved personally? You could write to our missionaries, perhaps by starting a pen pal with some of them. Consider a family vacation being a short term missions trip. Our mission's pastor can tell you about those trips we have going on. As you approach retirement maybe God is calling you to be a cross cultural missionary. Students, this could be something you consider as well. You could get involved with the Global Missions team and you would certainly get a taste of all we do for those on the mission field.

So how can you get involved financially? Here is what my wife and I approach faith promise financially. I illustrate it for we come up with our faith promises systematically, sacrificially and supernaturally. God has blessed us and I'm astounded at what God has allowed us to be stewards over. We want to be found faithful and to whom much is given much is required. We don't take our financial abilities and build our lifestyle but we take our financial abilities and build our giving and then our lifestyle.

Secondly, we look at it sacrificially. So we'll look at projects we might want to do around the house and look at the financial cost for each one. Then we'll eliminate one and give what it would have cost us to the faith promise that year. Something that we think we need we end up setting aside for something bigger that's a need.

Thirdly, we look at it supernaturally. God may give you something unexpected and pray through what God wants you to do with it. Every amount matters and so when we hear what has been given to faith promise and hear the cents added on it tells us that children are giving. Families are teaching their children about what it means to give. We need to embrace it and engage in it. We have a mission, a message and a means to accomplish it which comes right out of the Bible. So we make that commitment.

I remember when I was in grade school and hearing about Jim Elliot and the other missionaries with him who died in order to get the Gospel to the Auca Indians. Everybody said that missions will die. Wycliffe ministries reported the following year on missionary applications that they went up three times more than the year before after their death. There is much that Jim Elliot has said that I appreciate but perhaps the one I appreciate more is this; Live your life as a Christian so that when it comes time to die all you have to do is die. You don't have to go back and edit anything.

How can I live my life so that when it comes time to die all I have to do is die and go be with Jesus? To live is Christ, so Christ what do You want me to do personally, financially and prayerfully so that the nations can be glad when they hear the Good News and worship You? What is it that You want to do through me? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Consecrate your giving to the Lord, what He is leading you to do. I love the song that says 'little is much when God is in it.' It's amazing what God does with loaves and fishes and when people engage personally, prayerfully and financially. Lord, I don't know what that boy felt when he looked at the thousands when he brought of the up the five loaves and two fish, but I know what he felt like afterwards – little is much when God is in it – so just as You blessed those fishes and loaves I pray Your blessing on what we're about to commit. I pray Your people would have great joy as well as anticipation of what You're going to do as we become woven into that tapestry of being receiving and giving churches – receiving people, resources and prayers, then giving

people, resources, and prayers – to extend the colonies of the Kingdom through church planting and evangelism and discipleship. Father, I pray Your blessing upon the faith promise gift and the giver. Then, I pray You will receive all the glory in this partnership we have with others, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

We who inherit the Gospel blessings from the Cross of Christ have also inherited the Gospel Mission and Message from the Crown of Christ.

Matthew 28:18–20

Life Takeaway

Every True Church, like every True Christian is a “Receiving Church”

Every True Church, like every True Christian is a “Giving Church”

Personally – Financially – Prayerfully