

The Great Omission

Luke 24:44-49

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A young boy asked his mother and grandmother to play with him in his new sandbox in the front yard. He gave each of them a shovel and pail, and they eagerly started scooping sand. Before long, they became engrossed in their conversation. As they chatted and continued to fill their buckets with sand, they noticed that people walking by were giving them funny looks. It finally hit them that they had become so busy talking they hadn't noticed the little boy had wandered off to the backyard to play. Here they were, two grown women playing in a sandbox by themselves!

It's very easy to lose sight of why we're doing what we're doing, isn't it? When we forget our purpose, we can end up looking a little foolish and accomplishing very little. Sadly, the same thing can happen in churches. Over time, it's common to no longer remember our mission and get caught up in activities, programs, and traditions that have little to do with the task Jesus gave us to accomplish. That's why we must stay focused on our mission, and our role in fulfilling it.

During our Go Con weekend, Todd Ahrend walked us through the five Great Commission texts found at the end of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and at the beginning of the Book of Acts. The final charge of Jesus is repeated and recorded in multiple places because God doesn't want us to miss His heartbeat and our primary purpose for living. These commissions are similar, but each one has a different focus.

- In **John 20:21**, we are **sent ones**, just as the Father sent the Son with humility, love, and sacrifice.
- In **Luke 24:46-47**, we carry **His message and His power** to all nations, proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins through His death and resurrection, empowered to be witnesses by the Holy Spirit.
- In **Mark 16:15**, we see the **scope of the mission**, as the gospel is to be preached to everyone, everywhere.
- In **Matthew 28:18-20**, we go **with the authority** of the risen King who sends us to make disciples of all nations.

- And in **Acts 1:8**, we are given **His strategy**, to be witnesses beginning in Jerusalem and then going with the gospel to the ends of the earth through the power of the Spirit. We're to start local and go global.

Together these five passages show that the Great Commission is not optional but essential so the whole world will hear, and all the nations will rejoice. The last command of Jesus, which is to go and make disciples of all nations, must become our first and greatest commitment. While His final words must be our foremost work, we often get distracted and forget what we're called to be and what we're called to do. In short, it's very easy for the Great Commission to become the Great Omission while we play in our sandboxes.

Over the years I've preached multiple messages on Matthew 28:18-20, I've preached verse-by-verse through the Gospel of Mark, I've focused on John's account during several Easter sermons and have preached multiple sermons on Acts 1:8. But I've never preached through Luke 24:44-49 until this weekend.

The risen Lord Jesus makes our purpose crystal clear in this passage by laying out the foundation of our mission, the focus of our message, the field of our ministry, and the force for the movement He's called us to be part of.

As we read this text, imagine how the disciples first processed these words, even as they tried to comprehend that Jesus had just been raised from the dead: ***“Then He said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’”***

Here's our main idea: *To keep the Great Commission from becoming the Great Omission, we must live on mission by glorifying God and making disciples of Jesus in our families, among our neighbors, and among the nations.*

1. The foundation of the ministry. Jesus made sure the disciples took their marching orders from the Scriptures. We see this in verse 44: ***“Then He said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that***

everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Jesus made it clear that all three divisions of the Old Testament speak about Him – in the Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Everything written about Jesus ***“must be fulfilled.”*** The phrase ***“must be”*** refers to, ***“a required necessity”*** as used in Luke 24:7: ***“That the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”*** The death of Jesus was not the result of sinful people getting the upper hand. It was God’s sovereign purpose, in fulfillment of countless Old Testament Scriptures.

I think of the time Jesus stood up to read the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in Luke 4:21: ***“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*** According to Biblical scholars, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 Old Testament prophecies! Jesus repeatedly emphasized how all the Scriptures find their fulfillment in Him. One example is found in Luke 24:27 when He walked on the road to Emmaus with two men: ***“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”***

The source of our mission is rooted in the foundation and fulfillment of all the Scriptures. Missions flows out of understanding the Bible’s grand narrative beginning with God blessing Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and through him blessing all nations, to its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. According to Galatians 3:16, Christ is the ultimate seed of Abraham, through whom the nations are blessed. His redemptive mission will culminate in the worship of the Lamb when people from every nation, tribe, and tongue gather before the throne, as pictured in Revelation 7:9–11.

Luke 24:45 tells us Jesus gives us understanding of the Bible: ***“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”*** The word ***“opened”*** means, ***“to unroll, expound, explain”*** and ***“understand”*** refers to ***“comprehending.”*** In a similar way, we need His help today to comprehend the Bible. As such, a good prayer to prayer before reading Scripture is found in Psalms 119:18: ***“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”***

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2. The focus of the message. After making sure we get the foundation of the ministry right by understanding the Scriptures, we must get the focus of the message correct by communicating the truth of the gospel and what happened on the cross. This is spelled out clearly in verses 46-47a: ***“And said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name...’”*** We see again how the message is connected to the fulfilment of the Old Testament: ***“Thus it is written.”***

To help us remember the core message of the gospel, let’s focus on four key words from this text – reproach, resurrection, repentance, and remission.

- **Reproach.** The phrase, ***“the Christ should suffer,”*** means that Jesus endured indignities and incredible pain before He died in our place. Luke 9:22 says, ***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed...”***

The reproach of Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament. Psalm 22:16 was written 1,000 years before Christ and looks ahead to the cross, saying, ***“They have pierced my hands and my feet.”*** And Isaiah 53:5, written 700 years before the crucifixion, declares, ***“He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities.”*** Centuries before Calvary, Scripture painted the picture of a suffering Savior who would take our place, as our sin substitute.

Luke 18:31-33 gives specifics about the brutality Jesus experienced and the certainty that this had to happen: ***“And taking the twelve, He said to them, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him...’”***

The Apostle’s Creed captures it like this: ***“He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried...”*** The cross was not some unfortunate accident that happened to Jesus. It was a necessary part of God’s redemptive plan.

- **Resurrection.** Jesus suffered, He died, He was buried, and He was raised from the dead! Listen to the last part of verse 46: ***“...and on the third day rise from the dead.”*** Luke 24:7 says, ***“That the Son of Man must be***

delivered in the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” Our gospel message must always include the resurrection of Jesus as 1 Corinthians 15:14 says, **“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.”** In Acts 4:2, when Peter and John were preaching, the religious leaders were **“greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”**

Here’s a helpful summary: *“Preaching the resurrection is essential because it validates Jesus’ claims, provides the basis for forgiveness of sins, offers hope for future eternal life, and demonstrates God’s power over death. Without the resurrection, the Christian faith would be in vain, leading to a meaningless existence with no basis for salvation or a future with God.”*

- **Repentance.** In Luke 24:47, Jesus emphasizes that **“repentance”** must be proclaimed when we share the gospel. This is often a missing element in our gospel presentations. The word **“repentance”** means, *“a change of mind that results in a change of action.”* It’s the idea of turning from sin and turning to the Savior. John MacArthur writes, *“One of the clearest elements of the invitation to salvation on the pages of Scripture is the issue of repentance.”*

Too often we present Jesus like an “app” we download on our phones, or as an “add-on” to our lives. As a result, some churches are filled with more fans than true followers. Sharing the gospel without emphasizing repentance risks presenting a diluted message that doesn’t fully represent the radical change that Jesus calls for. We must resist watering down the gospel by offering cheap grace which leads to “easy believism” with no demands, with no self-denial, and no discipleship. As Bonhoeffer famously said, *“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”*

In Mark 1:4, we see that John the Baptist preached **“for the forgiveness of sins.”** In Mark 1:15, Jesus’s first sermon gave a clarion call to repentance: **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.”** In Luke 5:32, Jesus said, **“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”**

Peter preached a repentance sermon in Acts 3:19-20: **“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may**

come from the presence of the Lord...” In Acts 17:30-31 Paul preaches, *“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.”* When Paul shared his testimony before King Agrippa in Acts 26:20, He declared, *“...they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”*

When I was working on the sermon this week at a coffee shop, a guy stopped by my table with a newspaper under his arm. I smiled and asked him to let me know if he’s able to find any good news in it. Then I pointed to my open Bible and remarked, *“If you can’t find any in there, there’s a lot of good news right here.”* He rolled his eyes and said, *“Yeah, I knew you’d say that.”* As he quickly made his escape, I forgot that I had used this approach with him before. I wanted to make the point that we must first understand the bad news about our condition and turn from it, before we will experience the good news of forgiveness.

- **Remission.** Steven Cole writes: *“Forgiveness of sins is the first and foremost need of every person who has sinned against God.”* Let’s circle back to Luke 24:47: *“...and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name...”* The word **“forgiveness”** means *“to be released, to have your sins remitted as if they had never happened.”*

When Jesus died, He took upon Himself all your sins. As your substitute, through His shed blood, He absorbed the righteous and holy wrath you deserved, satisfying God’s demand for justice. On the cross, Jesus exchanged His righteousness for your rottenness, declaring you justified, forgiven, and freed from both the penalty and the power of sin upon your profession of faith. And He was raised from the dead on the third day, demonstrating His power over death, the devil, and our own depravity.

Such forgiveness is not partial; it is total. We don’t have to perform good works to achieve it, nor do we have to beat ourselves up by doing penance for falling short. It’s not a matter of “doing” because it’s already been “done.” The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 10:10-18). If you are in Christ, Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation before Him and Romans 8:39 says there will never be any separation from Him. This forgiveness is immediate and instant whenever a sinner repents

and receives his pardon through the new birth. Plus, God's full forgiveness is offered to the worst of sinners, like me! That's why the gospel is good news!

To preach the gospel "*in His name*" means to proclaim the glories of the gospel under His orders and by His authority as Acts 4:12 proclaims: "***And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***" We do not speak on our own; we speak for the risen King, carrying His message and His power to a world in desperate need of forgiveness from the penalty of sin and freedom from the power of sin.

To keep the Great Commission from becoming the Great Omission, we must live on mission by glorifying God and making disciples of Jesus in our families, among our neighbors, and among the nations.

3. The field of the mission. Charles Spurgeon writes, "*They were told by their great Master what to preach, where to preach it, how to preach it, and even where to begin to preach it.*" Notice the end of verse 47: "***...to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.***" They were to launch in Jerusalem because as Romans 1:16 says, "***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***"

They were to start local and go global to "***all nations.***" The phrase "all nations" (Greek: *panta ta ethne*) emphasizes ethnic and linguistic groups, not modern nation-states. This strategy is fleshed out in Acts 1:8: "***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.***" Likewise, we're to begin with our neighbors *and* go to all nations.

Have you picked up that there's a common tension in discussions about missions? Some argue that there are plenty of needs in our own community and missions is primarily about helping those close to us (local outreach), while others insist it's only about overseas work (global missions). Friends, it's not an either/or, but a both/and. The church in Acts cared for local needs by feeding widows in Acts 6, while commissioning missionaries like Paul and Barnabas to reach Gentiles in Acts 13. Both were expressions of the same gospel mission.

Someone said it like this: "*Loving your neighbor (local) equips and fuels the call to love the nations (global). Local ministry builds disciples who can then go or*

support global efforts, while global missions inspire local believers to see their role in God's worldwide plan." As we learned at Go Con, there are still approximately 3,100 language groups with no Bible and no church. Because the task remains unfinished, we must intentionally prioritize the least reached parts of the world. We've left these 32 flags up on the platform because they represent the countries where our Go Team partners are strategically positioned but it also serves as a reminder that we have more work to do.

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4. The force for the movement. The disciples will be given two powerful forces to help them complete this commission.

- **They will be witnesses.** We see this in verse 48: ***"You are witnesses of these things."*** It's interesting we are not called to be judges or prosecuting attorneys. A ***"witness"*** doesn't argue or embellish but simply testifies to what they have personally seen or heard as they stick to the facts in a case. This word is used multiple times in the Book of Acts. Acts 4:20 is one example: ***"For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*** Like the man born blind in John 9:25, you may not be able to debate theology, but if you're saved you can say, ***"One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."***

I should mention that the word ***"witness"*** comes from a root word referring to ***"martyr"*** as Revelation 12:11 reminds us: ***"And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."***

- **They will receive power from the Holy Spirit.** We won't be able to do the witnessing work we've been given to do unless we receive the promised power from the Holy Spirit. We see this in verse 49: ***"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*** The word ***"behold"*** can be translated as, ***"Lo! Behold!"*** and is designed to get their attention. The word ***"upon"*** has the idea of ***"resting on."***

The disciples were to ***"stay in the city,"*** or as the KJV says, they were to ***"tarry,"*** which was a figure of speech meaning to ***"sit down."*** In Acts 1:4,

they were again told to ***“wait for the promise of the Father.”*** According to Acts 1:14, the disciples devoted themselves to prayer. The Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:4.

The idea of being ***“clothed”*** is a word picture to communicate we will be surrounded and covered by the Holy Spirit. We get our word ***“dynamite”*** from the Greek word for ***“power.”*** Amazingly, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells with and within believers at conversion. John 14:16-17 records what Jesus said earlier about the Holy Spirit: ***“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows him. You know him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*** This is a fulfillment of Ezekiel 36:26: ***“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...”***

This Holy Helper will also be our teacher and help us remember the words of Jesus according to John 14:26: ***“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*** He may even help us remember sermons!

Brothers and sisters, let’s commit ourselves to the foundation of the ministry, to the focus of the message, to the field of the mission, and to the force of the movement.

In one small village church overseas, missionaries noticed something unusual the first time they visited. In the front of the little church, right near the pulpit, there was an empty wooden chair. It wasn’t broken. It wasn’t forgotten. It was intentional.

When asked about it, the pastor smiled and said, ***“That chair is for the one who’s not here yet.”*** He went on to explain, ***“Every time we gather to worship, that chair reminds us of the person in our village who still hasn’t heard that Jesus suffered, died, and rose again. The empty chair reminds us to pray, to go, and to speak until that chair is filled.”***

That simple chair preached a powerful sermon: ***we’re not finished until everyone has heard.***

Friend, who represents the “empty chair” in your life?

A family member? A neighbor? A classmate? A coworker? Someone from another culture who's never heard His name?

Don't let this chair stay empty. Let it remind you of your mission because the risen Christ has called *you* to be His witness. He's given you His message, His authority, and His power through the Holy Spirit.

Let's not get stuck in the sandbox of secondary things. Let's remember the empty chair and let's go fill it.

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Action Steps

- 1. Practice sharing your testimony.**
- 2. Get baptized the weekend of November 22-23.**
- 3. Fill out a Go Con Response Card.**
- 4. Repent and receive Christ right now.**

I'm compelled to give you an opportunity right now to be saved from your sins through the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. I've talked to some of you who have been in process as you've been counting the cost. Are you ready right now to receive the gift of forgiveness and freedom found only in Christ?

Jesus took the *reproach* you deserve when He died in your place. He was *raised* from the dead on the third day. He's calling you now to *repentance* so you can receive *remission* of your sins.

Are you ready to sit in the chair or will you keep playing in the sandbox?

Invitation