

Today we are taking a three-week break from our All Hail King Jesus series. Well, sort of. These next three weeks we are going to focus on what it means to grow Christians - discipleship. Is that our mission, our calling, the result of our abiding in Christ? Yes, yes, and yes. The texts we will use each week are teachings of Jesus, so that's why I say we are only sort of leaving the current series. We're entitling this series "Complete in Christ," and I will be sharing this series with our Discipleship Pastor Michael Campbell who will speak next week and Christian Clark, our student pastor who will speak the following week. I'm taking mission, Michael will take calling, and Christian will take abiding.

The overriding verse for this three-week series is Colossians 1:28:

Colossians 1:28

28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

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It starts and ends with one thing – proclaiming Jesus. The Greek word is katangello where we get the word angel. This is the message we messengers keep talking about - Jesus. We don't deviate. There is no way to accomplish the rest of the verse if you ever wander from these first three words, we proclaim Him. In doing so, we admonish people which means gentle reprove, correction. Where is your life not aligned with Jesus? You need to know the consequence, the truth about your situation. We teach Jesus with the wisdom He provides. That is the only way to reach the goal of presenting to God every person under our care to be complete in Christ. The word complete is the Greek word telios which can also be translated as perfect or whole.

Let me give a brief explanation. When a person comes to Christ in faith and receives His salvation they are given new life, a new heart, and the filling of the Holy Spirit. They are made complete, telios, in Him. There is no defect or lack in the complete and finished work of Jesus in the redemption of our heart. But, the sin patterns of our past are well ingrained in our behavior and growing in Christ, maturing in Christ is the lifelong process of seeing His work bring our outward behavior into line with who we now are on in the inside - complete.

There are some who become Christians and continue to let the sin patterns of their old life dominate. They gather teachers around them who tell them sin is natural as long as you're a human or the new life of Christ forgives everything, so don't be concerned with your sin. It's no big deal. So, they don't concern themselves with maturing in Christ and live a stunted, or stuck, no growth Christian life. Paul describes them in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

1 Corinthians 3:1–3

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

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He's telling the church they are walking, living like unbelievers. It's time to grow and accept the meat of the word that will be constantly changing you into a person who reflects the completeness of Christ because that's who you are.

If you are an infant in Christ, it is my goal to make you as uncomfortable as possible because proclaiming Jesus, pointing out the selfishness, the pride, the jealousy, the strife is out of alignment with His life that has been given to you by His Holy Spirit. It is my goal to teach you wisely who He is because it is He who lives in you as a believer. The outcome is that Christ will work in you, constantly shaping your life into completeness where your outer life matches more and more your inner life – your new identity in Jesus. That's discipleship. Growth is expected throughout our lives. You are never to settle in and stop growing no matter how old you are. Let Jesus conquer those sin patterns. Keep pursuing Him. Keep growing. Maturity is expected.

That's a lengthy intro to the series. Now to my message on mission. One of the last things Jesus says to His disciples is this:

Matthew 28:18–20

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

From this Scripture, there's no other way to say this.

Our MISSION is Making Disciples

When studying scripture, one of the most important things to establish is context. When is this being said? What is the context for these words of Jesus? The timeframe for these words is after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He is saying these things to His disciples in His resurrected body. But He is also saying this to them in that period of time between the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. So, the disciples are the same disciples who had been asking dumb questions, denying Jesus, hiding for their lives at the cross, and so on.

I can just imagine the scene when Jesus is giving them this great mission which is basically to change the world. He says make disciples of all nations. I can just see the disciples reacting to this stirring call of Jesus politely nodding their heads while inside thinking “he's crazy.” John looks at Peter, who just denied Jesus, thinking, “you're counting on him?” Bartholomew is looking at Thomas thinking, “he doubts everything and you're counting on him.” They're all thinking, that's a nice speech Jesus, but we aren't the ones to pull this off.

They probably even miss the point Jesus is making as He closes. He says I am with you always. They know He's leaving, so they probably receive that like having a dead relative still in one's heart. They are gone but still live in my memory. No – Jesus is telling them. I am with you always. I literally am not counting on you guys. I will be right there all the time, every day, supplying what is needed and then He includes you and I in this verse when He says even to the end of the age. Those disciples weren't living that long. Jesus is speaking to all His people throughout history up until the end of the world. I will be with you – ALWAYS!

Throughout the gospels the teachings of Jesus were either misunderstood by His disciples, or they were head scratchers where they had no idea what He was talking about. I can just see them after Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit is poured out on

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them giving them the mind of Christ, the power of the Spirit, and then they keep realizing, “Ok, now I get what He was saying.”

Let’s look at the verses. Jesus begins by saying He has been given all authority over heaven and earth. As my people, therefore go and make disciples. You will be operating under the supreme authority which is over all. You will not be acting under the authority of men, even yourselves. It doesn’t say I’m transferring that authority to you, but I will bring my authority into you through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples might have thought, “but what about Caesar or Pilate. What if they don’t like what we’re doing. What about the Sanhedrin, they just killed you after all.”

Let’s be honest, sometimes today Christians just act like wimps. They don’t want to offend or be out of place or be seen as old-fashioned or simple-minded or get in trouble. So, they bow the knee to human authorities when the truth is they are operating under the supreme authority of the risen Christ and have not received a spirit of timidity, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. They carry with them the full protection of the armor of God, they are more than conquerors through Christ who enables them.

I think of the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who stood up to the ruling Nazis and was martyred just a few months before the end of the war. He always understood that he was operating under a supreme authority. We serve under the supreme authority Jesus who is over all the heavens and the earth.

Therefore, go and make disciples. The construction of this verse has always amazed me because it is not what you think from the English text. There are four verbs in the passage – **Go, Make disciples, Baptize and Teach**. When it comes to these four verbs, one of those verbs is an imperative meaning you strongly must do this. Two are active or activities that result from the imperative and one is in the aorist passive tense meaning an ongoing action that naturally occurs passively. Can you guess which is which? The two **active verbs** are baptizing and teaching meaning that the subject is performing the action stated. Here’s where it gets interesting. The **aorist passive** verb is the verb Go and the **imperative** is the verb Make Disciples. Here’s what all that means.

Jesus is telling them that under His authority which He knows will be empowering them after Pentecost, as you go through your journey, you will be bringing those around you into completeness in Christ. The force of the verse is not on the going but on the making.

The more a person matures in Christ, the more those around him are influenced toward Christ. It’s the natural result of living out Christ in this new identity.

It’s interesting to me that the word disciple is never used by the apostles Paul and Peter in their New Testament writings. The focus is not on following or learning which is the thrust of the word disciple and has an outward focus, but on the maturing, growing, discernment of the work of the Spirit in and through us – an inner focus resulting in outward change.

Peter uses phrases like – Long for the pure milk of the word, you are being built up as a spiritual house, a chosen race, a royal priesthood proclaiming His excellencies, live for the will of God, fervently love one another, serve by the strength which God supplies, Be alert, resist the enemy, you are called by His own glory, partakers of the divine nature.

Paul uses phrases like – I no longer live, but Christ lives in me, for me to live is Christ, to die is gain, in Christ, I am a new creation, the old is gone. In Christ, I am the righteousness of God, partakers of the promise in Christ, having the mind of

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Christ, because of the armor of God I stand firm against the schemes of the devil, in Him I am complete. I have a new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of Jesus who created me.

There is a constant flow of Scripture helping us understand who we are in Jesus. That is the key to transformative living. Jesus has changed you when He saved you and He didn't leave anything out. His work was complete. There is not more of Jesus that will someday be coming to you. You already have it – everything. It's not what you lack, it's what you don't understand. You still call yourself a sinner when Jesus calls you a saint. You still think it's up to you when Scripture says everything must be given to you for life and godliness because you don't have it on your own and it also says apart from Him, you can do nothing. Abide in Christ. Abide in His love and fruit, real spiritual fruit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit flows out of your life and influences others to Jesus. Do you get the picture?

I want to give you just two things to focus on in order to grow, to mature in Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:20

20 Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.

First thing is this:

Change your thinking.

And I don't mean to learn, gain knowledge, study Scripture although those are good things. That is not the way this reads. Don't you like the way Paul puts things sometimes? He's saying here "You think like children, stop it. Be ignorant when it comes to evil. But in your thinking be mature or we could add – grow up.

How do children think? I remember when I was raising kids and always being asked why they couldn't do something or why I wouldn't buy them something or why life was treating them so unfairly. Can you believe it, but children seem to want their way – all the time. And they are willing to contend for their way presenting evidence why they should get their way, bringing witnesses to testify about the benefits of their way. Children think getting their way is the ultimate goal. And if it doesn't happen, they throw fits, sulk in a corner, give the silent treatment, relationally punish those not treating them right.

Aren't you glad we grow out of that kind of childish self-centeredness?

The more you grow in Christ, the more other-oriented you become because that's in alignment with the Spirit of Jesus that lives within you. He was always about others. You don't filter life through how it all affects you, but rather how your life can move others toward Christ. You don't talk so much about yourself but are genuinely interested in the lives of others.

To grow out of this self-orientation, we need help from other people.

Ephesians 4:11–13

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of

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the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

The second thing is this:

Jesus Uses People to Equip People

The passage makes it clear that God intends His church to be an equipping center growing, maturing people in Christ until we all know Christ together and live in His fullness. He has placed people in the body, to equip, to make adequate, the holy ones, the believers ready to serve one another in such a way that brings edification, unity, knowledge and maturity.

Reminds me of that first expression of the New Testament church in Acts 2. It says they were devoted to four things; the apostles teaching – learning the word; to fellowship – loving each other; breaking of bread – celebrating Jesus together; and prayer – communion with Jesus together. That was it. There was no devotion to having excellent Sunday services, or well-run ministries or even reaching their communities or evangelizing. Yet, what was the result? The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Healthy disciple-making churches see people saved on a regular basis. We need each other. We need people to help us become the people God has purposed for us to be.

When I was in college, there was a professor who for some reason took an interest in me. We would have long talks in his office about everything – college, career, calling, etc. He poured his life into me. He was also a part-time Minister of Music at a local church, and he asked the church if they would hire me part-time as I finished college and they did. I was his assistant. I don't know why, but he loved me like I was his son. I saw in his life one thing over and over – Jesus. He was selfless, caring, only interested in how he could help a young man grow into the person Jesus designed for him to be.

As you hear this today, maybe you realize when it comes to maturing in Christ, you are kind of stuck. It could be to the point, that you've just accepted the sin patterns in your life. Maybe you need to change the way you think. Believe victory is possible, that Jesus in you can change you. Maybe you isolate spiritually. For whatever reason, you don't let others in. Relationships, people is how Jesus built others up. You will never fully mature by attending services, reading books, listening to podcasts. We need people God puts in our path to love us, to encourage us to be the people of God. Growing Up mature Christians – making disciples. That is our Mission.