JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

OUR GREAT COMMISSION

The Gospel Is for All People, and It Cannot Wait

> The gospel is for every age, every class and every race, the people who receive it need time to grow, and the stakes are heaven and hell, so the church cannot afford to move one inch at a time.

MAIN TEXT
Mark 16:14-18

FIRST PREACHED
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SERIES
We're Relentlessly Driven by the Mission, Week 1 of 4

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. The gospel is for all people: every age, every class and every race
2. We are in it for the long haul: people get saved and then go through a process, and the Holy Spirit does the work we cannot
3. The consequences are massive: heaven or hell, life or death, so urgency outranks preference and comfort

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/vKO_MfaYpZY

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/our-great-commission

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message opens a four-week series on one of the church's values: we are relentlessly driven by the mission. It is the heavy message of the series, and it is meant to be. Tell the congregation so at the start, and promise them that the weeks that follow will be more instructional and inspirational.

It was preached to a church Pastor Jason had only recently begun to pastor, and it confronts two things head on: a church that does not yet look like its community, and a leadership culture that prizes slow, comfortable change. Say both plainly, with warmth and without apology. The tone is urgent, not angry.

Introduction

Illustration: the bucket of water. Have you ever seen a movie where a dad cannot get his teenager out of bed, so he walks in and dumps a bucket of water on him? This message is a Holy Ghost water bucket. My cry this morning is: wake up, church.

> MARK 16:14-18 ESV
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> 14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

(A light moment that landed when it was preached: "Go ahead and bring out the snakes and the poison. We're Spirit-filled. We're not *that* Spirit-filled.")

Today's message: **Our Great Commission.** For the next four weeks we are looking at one of our values: **we are relentlessly driven by the mission.** When I get my eyes on the Great Commission, the mission of seeing lost people saved, my eyes turn red. It should bother us greatly when people are not saved. Not because they aren't like us, but because it is not good for them. People need the gospel.

MY LIFE WAS CHANGED BY THE LOCAL CHURCH

I came from a dysfunctional home and an unsafe environment, and I ended up in church around 12 years old. My life was formed, changed and bettered because I was rooted and grounded in the local church.

Every preacher, pastor and prophet in the body of Christ is rooted in the experiences they had in a local church.

People only get rooted when the soil is moved around. There has to be a little disruption if you want to make disciples.

Illustration: Jesus Revolution. In the late 1960s, Chuck Smith, pastor of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, watched the hippie movement explode around him: kids with long hair, barefoot, strung out on drugs and searching for meaning. Most churches at the time were pushing them away. Chuck made a radical decision: we are not going to lock the doors on these people; we are going to change the way we do ministry so they know they are welcome. He let them come in barefoot, welcomed the rock music and the guitars, and built a church that was less about tradition and more about transformation.

One of those young hippies was Greg Laurie. At 17 he was lost in the drug culture, addicted, empty and searching. In that movement he met the gospel and a church that made space for him, and he gave his life to Christ. Today Greg Laurie pastors Harvest Christian Fellowship, one of the largest churches in America, and leads the Harvest Crusades, where millions have heard the gospel in person and hundreds of thousands have made decisions for Christ. It all traces back to a local church that dared to change so people could be reached.

The Great Commission does not happen by accident. It happens when a local church says, "We will do whatever it takes to reach people." Every person whose life has been transformed by the gospel is the fruit of a church that was willing to disrupt its soil so someone else could get rooted. This morning I am bringing a Holy Ghost rake.

1. The Gospel Is for All People

> MARK 16:15 ESV
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> [15] And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Jesus sends His followers to "all the world." Before He ascended, He said the same thing: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Not just the people already here. All people. Have the congregation say it: **all people.**

EVERY AGE

We are generationally intentional (a value for a later series). This should be a church that works for everybody, from the nursery to the nursing home.

EVERY CLASS

No money, some money, lots of money: from the trailer park to Park Avenue. "The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all" (Proverbs 22:2). We honor all people, and we will teach people in every class that you can still have class.

EVERY RACE

This is a major Bible issue, and it is a major issue in this area. Coming into the Mobile area, I can feel something in the air around race and division that is not good. We are going to deal with it.

I have said in meetings that we will have people in this church who don't look like us, and I have heard some secondhand rumblings: "What does he mean by that?" Here is what I mean. When I go to Publix, I see white folks, black folks, Indian folks and Hispanic folks. When I go to Walmart, I see the same. When I pick my daughter up from marching band practice, I see white kids, black kids, Indian kids and Hispanic kids. At the football game, all of us sat together cheering for the same team. But when I come in here, I don't see it yet.

If we shop together and go to school together, we ought to go to church together.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said more than sixty years ago that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours in America. We have come a long way since then, but that has not changed, and we are going to see it change right here. Red, yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight, and we ought to be worshiping together.

To those who are struggling with this: get comfortable with the idea, because it will not only show up at church. One of your grandbabies is going to bring it into your kitchen. If you need to be mad at someone, be mad at your pastor. I'll be fine.

> **NUMBERS 12:1-2 ESV**
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> [1] Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. [2] And they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it.

A Cushite came from the region of Nubia, south of Egypt. Moses' wife was a dark-skinned African woman, and Miriam and Aaron had a problem with her because of it. ("They aren't just black. They are very black. They are Wesley Snipes black." Preached this way; see the review notes.) And notice the most sobering words in the passage: "And the LORD heard it." When the cloud lifted, "Miriam was leprous, like snow" (Numbers 12:10).

God does not look favorably on racism, or on any kind of othering.

To the Southerners in the room, of whom I am one (I'm from Birmingham; I grew up going to lunch in Hueytown): I know some of you are wondering, "Is he trying to build a black church?" Let me be clear. **I'm not trying to build a black church, but I sure as heck am not trying to build a white church.**

Vision: who is on our property? Some nights the field behind our building is full of Hispanic families playing soccer. One thing I have my eye on is Spanish translation for our services, so people whose first language is not English can worship with us. It is easy, it is inexpensive, and it is missional.

2. We're in It for the Long Haul

> **MARK 16:16-18** ESV
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> [16] Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
> [17] And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will
> speak in new tongues; [18] they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly
> poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

People get saved, and then they go through a process.

On one hand, there is a **tangible process.** We will build clear steps that walk a new believer toward becoming a fully developed follower of Christ.

On the other hand, there is an **existential process.** Everybody is dealing with their own stuff. Raise your hand if that is you. It is me too.

Instant transformation is rare. We put instant transformation on the stage and shoot videos about it, and we should thank God for it: the drug addict who comes to the altar and gets up with no more desire for drugs. But I am just as grateful for the man who comes to the altar a drug addict and stands up a drug addict, because the Holy Ghost has started to work on him. Give the Spirit time, and He will carry out His purpose in that person. Some people will give their lives to Jesus and then not improve at the rate you want them to.

Abraham's long process. James 2 is where we get the idea that faith without works is dead: "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). James illustrates it with Abraham: Abraham believed God and was counted righteous, then offered Isaac, and "faith was completed by his works" (James 2:22). But look at the timeline. Abraham "believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness" in Genesis 15:6. He offered Isaac in Genesis 22, decades later. He was righteous the entire time. He was not waiting for that moment to become righteous.

And the title "friend of God" (James 2:23) was given in hindsight. God calls him "Abraham, my friend" through Isaiah (Isaiah 41:8), long after Abraham's lifetime.

So here is my commitment: if you put your faith in Jesus Christ and you are working through some problems, I will give you 40 years before I make a big deal out of it.

In a Holy Ghost church, we have to remember that the Holy Ghost does the work, and we are not the Holy Ghost.

3. The Consequences Are Massive: Heaven and Hell

> **MARK 16:16** ESV
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> [16] Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

> **JUDE 1:20-23 ESV**
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> [20] But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,
> [21] keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to
> eternal life. [22] And have mercy on those who doubt; [23] save others by snatching them out of the fire; to
> others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

This is the mission we are on: "save others by snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 1:23).

If we believe what Jesus said, that "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), then we cannot ignore this: within 20 miles of this building, there are approximately 312,000 people who are spiritually lost. Not the total population. People who, if they died today or if the eastern sky split open, would face eternity without Christ. That is not someone else's mission. It is ours. We are not just building a church. We are building a rescue operation.

THE PARABLE OF THE PIANO

Pastors have told this story for years. A pastor went to a church in North Georgia where the piano sat in the middle of the room, in everybody's way. He moved it to the side where it belonged, and the church drove him out of town. A couple of years later he drove through and stopped in to see the new pastor, and there was the piano, right where he had put it. "How did you get them to leave it there?" "Oh, they moved it back the day you left. I came in every night and moved it one inch. By the time it got where it needed to be, nobody noticed. It took a long time, but I never had any trouble, and I'm still here."

We have told that story like it is the gold standard of church leadership: come in, don't disrupt the soil, keep everyone comfortable, keep the train chugging along. There is some wisdom in it. Incrementalism, making changes slowly and confronting things slowly, is good for attendance and good for income.

But how many people go to hell every inch? Every day we spend moving the piano an inch, about six people in Mobile County die.

How many inches is a soul worth?

The apostle talks about snatching people from the fire, and we get upset over the song selection, the chairs being moved, or the lights changing. Maintenance or multiplication? Gatherings or the gospel? When did we get so impressed with what we have that we stopped wanting to be a lighthouse to the greater Mobile area?

Illustration: Room 418. Nurse Emily Carson was in the break room, barely halfway through her coffee. Her shift had ended 20 minutes earlier, but she liked to wait, unwind and talk with the next team coming in. That morning she felt an internal push: check on Room 418. It was not her patient, not her floor, not her responsibility. She almost shrugged it off. Almost waited until her coffee was finished. Almost played it safe. Instead she stood up, uncomfortable, early, out of her normal rhythm, and went. As she turned the corner into 418, she found Mr. Robert Hale in the middle of a seizure, alone in his bed, with no monitors alerting yet. She hit the call button, began stabilizing him and called for a crash cart. The team

arrived within seconds and brought him back from the brink. Later the attending physician told her, “If no one had been in that room in those exact seconds, we would have lost him. He didn’t have minutes. He had seconds.” She wasn’t the assigned nurse. She wasn’t ready. But she was willing to set down her coffee and go to Room 418, and because of that, Robert Hale is alive.

When people set their preferences and their comfort aside, it changes lives.

I know I can sound direct and no-nonsense about reaching lost people. I’m not trying to sound ugly, rude or uncaring. But this is urgent. It is not “wait and see.” It is not “we’ll do something later.”

Illustration: the tornadoes. Earlier this year we were living near Huntsville. Tornadoes touched down west of us and came right down Interstate 565, past our church. Then I realized they were coming for our house. I started pulling things out of a closet and telling my kids, “Get in the closet. Sit down. Here’s a pillow.” I was direct. I wasn’t the nicest. I was a little intense. And everybody was safe. Why? Because it was life or death. It wasn’t a trip to the zoo.

> **MARK 2:17** ESV
>
> 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Conclusion

This is life or death. So:

- feelings aside;
- preferences aside;
- history aside.

Over the next several weeks I am putting my foot on the accelerator to grow this church and reach this city, and I will give you resources and tools to fulfill your part in our Great Commission.

I love other churches and other pastors. But the way we have to lead a church in a community is as if we are the only hope. I don’t know what other churches are doing or how seriously they are taking it. I know what we are going to do.

If we don’t put a gospel church between the people of this area and hell, they have no hope.

Pray it with the church: Jesus, give us every sinner in Saraland and beyond. We call in the harvest. Then move to the altar call. We should start right now.



ABOUT

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