

## ***MADE FOR MISSION, MT.5:13-17***

Church Foundations #4

◆Intro: I read a story of a five-year-old girl, Lindsay, telling her little friend about Jesus. The children were sitting on the the front steps of the house, and the parents tiptoed up to the window to see and hear better. Lindsay told her friend that if she believed in Jesus and prayed, he would forgive her sins and she would go to heaven. The little girl was convinced, and prayed. When she was done praying, she looked up at Lindsay and asked, “Will my mommy be in heaven too?” Lindsay though for a moment that replied, “Yeah, if she believes in Jesus, but if you don’t want her there, don’t tell her about Jesus.”

◆I can remember it pretty clearly: one of my sons about 10 years old, standing under the silver maple in our front yard, explaining to the neighbor boy named Zach how if you ask Jesus to forgive your sins, he will, and you will be saved forever and live in heaven after you die. Both those boys are taller than I am now. Zach’s mother died and went to live with Jesus a year ago this month. And Zach seriously wonders if there really is a God at all.

◆Where this life is headed is a serious issue. It is at the core of making sense of being alive. And the answer that question brings us to another foundational purpose of the Church: mission, also referred to as evangelism.

### **◆1. As a follower of God, I was made for mission.**

◆So far we’ve looked at discipleship, fellowship, and ministry as core purposes of believers and the Church family of God. Today: mission. Just to make a distinction, Ministry, for example, is service to believers, whereas mission is service to unbelievers.

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◆A. This is at the very core of knowing God; to share that story, the true story of the universe, with others. The Scriptures are pretty clear that this is a norm for believers.

◆You've heard Matthew 28, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV.

◆And Jesus prays in John 17: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18, NIV.

◆And in John 20, after the resurrection: "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." John 20:21, NIV.

◆So central to our existence, and really the universe itself, is this purpose, that Jesus at one point explained that if his followers would not witness, the rocks would cry out and do it themselves! (Lk.19:40)

◆B. Sometimes people here the word "evangelism" and they get all disgruntled inside.

◆Images of loud, obnoxious men on TV, with scary hair, and white suits, knocking people to the floor with ten pound bibles, and selling bits of magic hankies guaranteed to cure what ails you for your tax-deductible gift of \$35 or more –may come to mind.

◆A fellow told me once that door to door evangelism conjured up negative thoughts in him of people on your doorstep thrusting pamphlets into your hands while the mac & cheese boils over, and

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your cradling your phone on your shoulder, as the baby pukes down your shirt. Evangelism has was a harsh term in his mind!

◆ I'm here to tell you that God wants you to witness, and it's simpler than you might think. Acts 1:8 says simply, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the utter ends of the earth."

◆ Notice that he didn't say, "You will be my defense attorneys." He didn't say, "You will be my salesmen". You don't have to defend God. And you don't have to sell God. All God wants you to do is be a witness. What's a witness? A witness is someone who just tells what they have seen. Can you tell someone what you've seen of God? (That's why we did that little exercise at the beginning of worship where you were invited to tell someone one thing God has done for you.)

◆ Lets think about another biblical occasion. In Luke 8 Jesus heals a demon-possessed man. Can you picture the story? Here's a man, who went from insanity, and running around naked in the hills, filled with some weird power that made him strong enough to break chains people would occasionally try to tied him up with – to a man clothed and in his right mind. With a word of command, the demons are gone, and new mind has come, and the man wants to follow Jesus through the world. Here's the interesting part, Jesus says, "No." Instead, he tells him to go home and tell people how much God has done for him. That's it. Go and tell your story. That's witnessing.

◆ C. Sometimes this seems hard for a few simple reasons:

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◆1) We think people aren't interested but they are. One Gallup poll found that 65 million Americans have no church home, but more than half of them (34 million) would attend if somebody just invited them. Another Gallup poll found that teens would rather talk about God than sex, drugs, or music!

◆2) We think we haven't got anything to tell, but we do! If God has ever answered a prayer, you have something to tell. If God has ever taught you something that worked, you have something to tell. If you've ever gone outta here and tried something you heard from the Bible and found God was right, you have something to tell. If you've ever prayed over a habit, or a sin, or a crisis, or a question, or a need, and had a solution arrive – you have something to tell! It's that simple. People can argue theology all day long, but no one can really argue with your experience. Where have you experienced God? When has God done something for you?

◆[What do you do if you haven't got anything to tell, or can't think of what God has done for you? Try this simple exercise: try to be or do something that you can't be or do without God. If, in your relationship with God you're only trying things that you can do on your own, then one of you is not needed!

◆Ask God to conquer a sinful habit in you that you know you lean toward over and over. Or, ask God to provide something you know you can not figure out, or provide yourself.]

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◆D. Now, we're gonna relieve a little pressure. Ready? It's not your job to change people. Your job is to point at the Changer of people. That's it!

Think of our text.

◆““You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16, NIV.

◆The Romans had a saying: “Nothing is more useful than sun and salt.” Sun and salt were the preservatives. You catch a fish, but you can't hang onto it for more than a day without it rotting, unless you salt it, or dry it. Now, we no longer appreciate that in our micro-wavable, ready-to-eat, hermetically sealed, shrink-wrapped, individually packaged society. But in Jesus day, salt and sun meant things could last. Of course, salt also enhances flavor, so Jesus is essentially telling his followers that they are the flavor and preservative of good life in the world, all by pointing to God.

◆Verse 16: do good *but in such a way that people* praise the Father in Heaven. Somehow in our shining there has to be a telling about the Father in Heaven. A simple pointing will do.

◆How about a strategy? Where do we start when it comes to mission?

◆**2. My mission starts close and aims far.**

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◆ Lets return to Acts 1:8 for a moment.

◆ *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8, NIV.*

◆ Think of this as a set of concentric circles broadening out around you.

◆ A. “Jerusalem” stands for my community.

◆ Your community is your friends, your family, your co-workers, your neighbors, anybody that crosses your path. The person who delivers your paper. The waitress at the diner you frequent. God has called you to point to Him with these people. Simply share with them good news of something God has done for you. (That’s what evangelism means: “good news”) (Ever watch Futurama? “Good news everyone”, says the professor in almost every episode.)

◆ I know of an eye doctor who puts the Four Spiritual Laws on the eye chart and says, “Now, read me the first one: God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

◆ I heard of a wallpaper hanger who when he finishes says, “Now you’ve seen my side job, let me take five minutes to tell you about my real job.” Then he tells about the love of Jesus in his life.

◆ I have a friend named Bruce (Frens), who worked in a counseling agency and counseled with a Muslim PHD named Hasheed. “I can help you,” he said. “You live a productive life. But what about something more? What about spiritual resources? You’re an educated man. Have you ever read anything in the Bible?” Hasheed

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asked, “Have you ever read the Koran?” They agreed to read each other’s choice. Bruce gave Hasheed the Gospel of John. After reading it, Hasheed returned and said, “I want to know why that book means something to you.” Bruce smiled wide across the restaurant table as he told me, “So, I told him about Jesus!”

### ◆B. “Judea” stands for my country.

◆This is the next widening circle, stepping out from buddy Steve, and niece Susan whom I’ve always known. See, a Christian’s mission is not just their own relation. Our vision is broader, our mission is farther.

◆I was at a local Habitat for Humanity presentation this week. As many of you know, Habitat seeks to renovate communities. They aim at eliminating poverty housing in the world. This is mission in our own backyard as well as worldwide and a great opportunity for us to be in our community with God’s love. Here’s an interesting thing: they want to do and Apostle Build. That’s a house that several churches join together in financing and building. If the churches will commit \$5000 over two years, and then work together on it, that can build a house! I love that they call it Apostle Build. Know what the greek word “apostello” means? “To send”. An apostle is a “sent one.”

◆I have friends in Highland who spend an evening every week at a prison doing Bible study with inmates and being their friends.

◆Many here mentor with Kids Hope hoping to share the love of God in the lives of children right here in our community. These are the “Judea” areas.

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### ◆C. “Samaria” stands for other cultures.

◆Samaria was not far away from the Judah, just a few miles. But so different were the cultures that a Jew would cross the Jordan River, hike up the other side, and cross back rather than set foot on Samaritan soil. Jesus’ instructions in Acts 1 tell us to step across barriers to the “unlike us” folk. (There’s probably a good reason for stepping beyond our own. Strange anomalies occur when families inbreed, even in the church.)

◆Bear in mind that in today’s world other cultures are all around us right here in town! If you ever find yourself in a neighborhood where you feel like an outsider, that would be a Samaria for you. God calls us to bring his good news there. Christians don’t avoid people unlike themselves. Christians are sent to them.

### ◆D. The “Ends of the Earth” stands for other lands.

◆There’s a mentality in this instruction that balances our natural tendency to care only about our close and immediate circumstance. This outlook assumes concern on a global scale, for mankind as a whole. The God-follower is not free to be self-absorbed. So Jesus sends us across the terrain. I believe this means more than sending money across the terrain but inhabiting Jesus’ love in other lands. Those who’ve gone to Peru can bear witness to the impact it has on people just to have foreigners present and interested in a person’s home. I recall one lady welcoming our group into her dirt-floored kitchen in tears at the thought that American believers would come all this way to say she was important to God.

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◆ *And then he told them, “You are to go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. Mrk 16:15 TLB*

### ◆ **Conclusion**

◆ Mission, or evangelism (means what? Good News) is somewhat of a unique foundational purpose of the Church. Remember, it’s telling the story of Jesus to those who don’t know him. It’s closely related to the purpose of Worship which we’ll discuss next week. Worship involves celebrating the story of Jesus with believers. Worship, along with fellowship, and discipleship, and ministry to one another –all these will go on in heaven! Mission is the only biblical purpose that can only be done here on earth. In God’s new world every knee will bow, every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord (Phil.2). There will be no one in heaven to evangelize!

◆ *“No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”” Jeremiah 31:34, NIV.*

◆ If you are a believer in Jesus Christ as Lord of the Universe, pray to him and he will forgive you and you will go to heaven! And if you are one of these, then part of the call on your life, and one of the reasons Sunrise exists in Lafayette, IN is not only to tell your mother about Jesus, but to want her in heaven! To not only tell your brother about Jesus, but to want him in heaven. So share something of what God has done for you with the neighbor boy, as Steve Green put it, “across the street or around the

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world, the mission's still the same; proclaim and live the truth in Jesus name.”