

The numbers are both staggering and almost impossible to grasp. 6.8 Billion people alive on planet earth. As a community of Christ followers we must engage with this number because we in fact are in the people business. Think of the languages, customs, foods, feelings, places, challenges and differences represented by a world of 6.8 billion people. How many of those 6.8 billion people do you like? Which ones is it ok if they don't hear the news of God's love for them in Christ? Do you experience any stirrings inside about the eternal destiny of people around the globe? Billions of them!

Those who study the advance of the gospel throughout the world's population measure this number in terms of people groups and whether these groups have been reached or not with the message of Christ in a sustainable manner. A people group is determined by the barriers that exist such as language and culture. Geography or location is a factor but it is possible to have neighbors where you still have significant barriers to overcome in order to relate well with them. A people group is a group where a church planting movement can happen without encountering barriers of language and culture. Following these definitions, by some researchers accounting there are about 16,700 people groups in the world. Of that number, 6,900 of these groups are currently unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. An unreached group is one where there is not a community of believing Christians with adequate resources to evangelize the group.

Reaching across the divides of language, culture and sometimes geography with the gospel is called missions. A missionary, generally speaking, is one who goes to another people group to proclaim the gospel and assist in the building of a church that can reproduce itself in that culture. To assist us as a church to be aggressively and effectively obedient in our missions assignment, we have appointed a Missions Team that is lead by a Deacon under the oversight of our Elders. This summer the Missions Team met several times and drafted a biblical mandate statement to clarify for us what our biblical assignment is. Our mandate statement is copied on the back of your bulletins. It reads:

As a part of God's universal church, KSBC is commanded to join in the effort to proclaim the Gospel among every people (ethne), gathering disciples into indigenous, reproducing churches, so that God will be glorified and people will be blessed.

This morning we want to take a look at this assignment and encourage each other to excel in this effort.

Let's read Matthew 28:18-20 together. This is one record in the Bible of Jesus final commission to his followers after his death and resurrection and just before ascending to heaven. It is an amazingly comprehensive yet simple set of instructions for his followers to understand and follow. In many ways your joy and contentment as a follower of Jesus is hardwired into this assignment. You detach yourself from this assignment and you distance yourself from the expressed heart of God and command of Christ. You must understand this about God; he loves all 6.8 billion of us.

Note three observations about these verses:

1. There are 4 uses of the term 'all.' All authority, all nations, all that I commanded and all the days.
2. While the main command is 'make disciples,' go, teach and baptize also bear the force of command.
3. 'Therefore' of verse 19 sets up a cause/effect relationship that is key to understanding and obeying this commission.

It is at this 3rd observation that we will begin our study this morning. Typically what motivates followers of Christ to invest their lives in the challenging work of missions is . . .

a subjective personal sense of calling

a sad realization of those less fortunate dying without Christ

a desire to make a difference with their lives in a big way.

Jesus did not intend for missions to be restricted to these limited perspectives that seemingly so few in the church ever genuinely experience. While these motivations are worth further examination, Jesus calls us to the superior motivating factor of his universal authority. The reason to go, disciple, baptize and teach others unlike us is because Jesus reigns over all and is worthy of our and everyone's complete submission. The reason people do not spend their lives supporting and living missions is because they do not believe Jesus is worth complete and total submission. Let's look at the motivation for risking and investing your life in missions.

Your motivation for spending your life so the unreached can hear is the supreme authority of Jesus Christ.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me . . . therefore”

Jesus’ powerful authority confronts you in a very real ‘in your face’ manner in the following three ways:

1. Jesus Christ has universal authority.

Now that Jesus has (given to me) this universal (all) authority over all the universe (heaven and earth), his followers are to act in decisive and intentional ways. This announcement that Jesus makes serves as a marker of the beginning of the universal mission of the church.

Jesus had authority before his death, resurrection and ascension. M 7:29; 9:6; 10:1; 24:35

But now that he has been raised from the dead and seated at the Father’s right hand, the spheres in which he exercises his authority have been expanded to include all heaven and earth . . . the universe.

Thus the announcements/explanations of Christ’s supreme lordship found in Eph. 1:19-23 and Phil.2:5-11.

Phil.2:10 . . . universal authority will always result in universal worship!

2. Jesus Christ has historical authority.

Another reason for you to spend yourself in advancing the gospel across and through all barriers is that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all history. The entire story of mankind as recorded in the Old Testament is one of looking for a promised deliverer. The answer for the longing and trouble of humanity is the promised coming King. Note how this is developed in three specific ways in the scriptures . . .

Compare the beginning/introduction of Matthews gospel with the conclusion. The fulfillment of promises made to Abraham are intentionally said to be fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is the ‘blessing’ for all nations of the earth.

Note the appeal to all the nations, families and clans throughout the Psalms. God’s intent has always been to restore and deliver people to himself from all nations. 22:27-28; 67:1-2

Note the testimony of Isaiah the prophet who declares the coming of a suffering servant that will attract the nations to his light. 49:6; 59:20 – 60:3.

Jesus Christ is not simply the head of a regional, tribal or cultural religious movement. His authority is that of one to whom all nations and peoples of all time will submit.

3. Jesus Christ has personal authority.

The real battle for getting churches like ours and church people like us to ‘join the effort’ of proclaiming the gospel among every people is not believing that Jesus has universal and historical authority, but rather it is our personal submission to it. You and I demand at least a portion of the control and definition of what our lives should be like. Therefore, rather than hearing the authoritative command of the reigning supreme Lord of all, we are content to hear and respond to our subjective feelings of need, sadness or desire.

Jesus says ‘go’, we hear ‘be generously inclined to consider some appropriate involvement.’

Jesus says ‘pick up your cross and follow me’, we hear ‘make as many changes as possible without radical cost to your comfort or feelings of worth.’

Jesus says ‘lose your life for my sake’, we hear ‘live your life in such a way that you can have Jesus and everything else you want.’

Your blind spots to the authority of Christ in our lives, church and world include your . . .

- Prejudice. A lack of love and compassion for people. Jonah
- Materialism. A belief that stuff satisfies. 1 Timothy 6
- Universalism. A brief thought that Christ is not the only way. Acts 17:29-31

The task of reaching the unreached, whether the barrier is the backyard fence or a different language, begins with submission to the authority of Jesus Christ.

Summary/Conclusion – read/review Matthew 10:28-39

Take Aways to the Table

1. Ask God for help as you examine your heart this morning. Do you find a passionate love for and submission to Jesus?
2. Repent for your lack of growing submission to Jesus. What is God doing in your heart this morning about your submission to his authority? What are your blind spots?
3. Renew and express your personal submission to the authority and worthiness of Jesus.

Study Questions

1. What impressions, observations or questions do you have from this study of Jesus authority from Matt. 28:18-20? Read/review the churches mandate statement printed in the intro section.
2. Discuss the relationship between Jesus claim of universal authority and the assignment of world missions. Why is motivation so crucial? What motivates you to take risks and make radical changes so others will hear about Jesus?
3. Check out <http://www.joshuaproject.net/> or <http://www.operationworld.org/> to get an exposure to the numbers and statistics of world evangelization. What tools do you use to keep your mind and heart sensitized to global awareness and need for the gospel?
4. Of the three barriers mentioned in the last point, which do you consider most dangerous in your life experience? Why? How do you combat these tendencies?
5. Have someone in the group explain the mission and vision of the Crosswalk project. How does this project fit in or fulfill the assignment given us by Christ to reach the nations?
6. Have various members of your group complete the following statement . . . For me, becoming a world Christian would mean I would have to . . . Support your thoughts with scripture and principles taught in today's study from Matt.28.
7. Spend time in prayer for each other that God would unite our hearts around his amazing, universal and blessed authority so that we will continue to join the effort of world missions.