

# Four Pillars of a Strong Church

## Pillar 4: “Passionate about People – Outside the Church”

Matthew 28:18-20

### Part 2

Well, this is our fourth and final installment of our four pillars of a strong church series.

And in some ways, this could be the first pillar of a strong church because the other three flow out of bringing people in here from out there. So the focus this morning is for people outside the church.

So let me begin by asking you this. Suppose you worked for a science lab and your people finally came up with **something** that could cure HIV. Millions are dying from the HIV virus and you now have the cure, and the higher ups of the lab have given you permission...

...to go tell everybody about this and you know what, they even say, you are allowed to give the vaccine to everyone you know who has HIV. Now you got something to share, don't you?

You got news that you want to share as quickly as you can and you want to get this remedy into as many hands as possible to prevent further dying.

Brothers and sisters, I want to talk about an even greater epidemic that is in our world today, that is right here among us in Bethlehem Township and the Lehigh Valley, and Pennsylvania, and the United States and the world.

**As a** matter of fact, in the Lehigh Valley alone, there is 1 church for every 6500 people. Only 2.8% of the valley are evangelical. The Lehigh Valley is the 12<sup>th</sup> most unreached metro area in the US.

That's a pretty dire epidemic right here in our own back yard. We got spiritually dead people all around us.

That's where we are going today, hopefully the Lord Jesus Christ will kindle an even greater fire within our bosoms for people outside our church, people who are far from God, people who are lost in their sin, people who are slaves to Satan, and headed straight for hell.

So this morning, we are going to look at a familiar passage that will hopefully do this for us. Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 28. Page 989 in the pew Bible. We are going to look at verses 18 through 20.

Many of you have this memorized, but this is the last thing that Jesus said to his disciples in the book of Matthew. And it is one of the mandates, one of the pillars for every church in every age.

**Beginning** with verse 18:

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Now** I included verse 18 because I think verse 18 is huge. Jesus is declaring His Sovereign Lordship over everything that exists.

First of all, "all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." John 1:3

The Bible also says that Christ "upholds the universe by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3)

Now think about that. The word "uphold" means a lot more than just zapping the earth and telling it to stand still. That word as used in the Bible means carrying something from one place to another.

So at this very moment and every moment that has ever occurred in human history, Jesus himself has and is directly and continually carrying everything along that is happening...

...including every breath that you take and every movement that you make with your body. (Acts 17:28) If Christ would ever stop doing this, everything would cease like pulling the plug on your TV. All of life.

How big is our God? That's the question. **How** big is our Christ? You see, I think for us to be better evangelists, we need to enlarge our vision of how big, and glorious, and authoritative, and powerful our God is.

When that happens, fear of God increases, and fear of man decreases, just like it did for the first apostles and they never backed down even when they were told to stop speaking about Jesus. You see...

They came to the realization that God the Father exalted Jesus, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11).

They knew a big Jesus. Therefore, they did not fear who they came across when they preached His name. Fear of man is a big hindrance to our evangelism...right, we all battle with that. The remedy is to grow in our understanding of how big Jesus is.

Listen, the disciples took to heart what Jesus prayed in John 17, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, (all flesh, everyone, the pagan, the biker, the prisoner, the murderer, your friends, your family...)

...to give eternal life to all whom you have given him."

He even has authority over who He gives salvation to! So you see...

God the Son submits himself to God the Father and God the Father gives **him all authority**, authority over salvation, authority over sickness, authority over demons, authority over sin, authority over death...

...authority to forgive sins, authority to judge, authority to lay down his own life for sin, authority to rule heaven and earth and throw Satan into the lake of fire at the end of the age. We see this all over the Bible.

So I say to myself, How big is your Jesus? Why in the world are you scared to talk about him! There's no reason to shrink back!

Daniel the prophet saw a big Jesus,

<sup>13</sup> “I saw in the night visions,

and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.

<sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.

Jesus said himself, “The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.”  
Matthew 24:30.

How big is our Jesus? How big is our Jesus when we are out there facing the giants?

Listen if I'm going to take on Hulk Hogan, I want the incredible Hulk behind me, OK. If I know that, I'll go after Hulk Hogan with confidence, but if I don't have the incredible Hulk backing me up, I can probably out run Hulk Hogan if you know what I mean, he's old.

But brothers and sisters, that's why Jesus is telling them this right before he is about to command them to do something that would otherwise seem to be an impossible task...

...but since the Sovereign Lord of the universe will be their power and backup...therefore disciples, therefore church in every age, it's time for you to turn the world upside down with who I am and what I've done.

**It's time** to take the news to the world. What fueled the fires of the early apostle's ministry was this; A Sovereign Lord who created the universe and that same Sovereign Lord coming to them in the person of Jesus Christ, dying for them, and then rising from the dead.

And they witnessed this right before their very eyes.

This is bigger news than a remedy for HIV. This is the greatest news that the world will ever hear. So...

**Verse 19**...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."

The first word you see there is the word, "Go...not come...but go..." That was the command of the Sovereign Lord of the universe. And we either obey or we don't obey. I don't think he is playing around here, like it's optional for the church.

Especially because of what he just did for the world. Now go tell them about it. Now go where? Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8...And to reiterate what we just said about backup...

**Right** before that he said, "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.

Or Bethlehem Township, your neighbors, your friends, your family, and then the Lehigh Valley when you are out there on your sports teams or dance teams, or theatre performances or mom's gatherings, or work partnerships...

...then branching out into the state of Pennsylvania when you visit extended family or you take short camping trips or close to home vacations, or short term mission trips. I think you get the point.

But here is what I think can happen, and it's a temptation, I feel it too, but we tend to take the Christian evangelist hat off when we leave here or we put it on only when we are around other Christians outside the church.

Somehow we've got to burn into our psyche that being a Christ follower is our first identity and that His mission for us is to be our first priority. Everybody's first identity and priority. Not just the leaders and the pastors.

In the book of Acts, **chapter** 8 verse 4 it says this, "Now those who were scattered (and they were scattered because of persecution, maybe that's what it will take for us to be bolder evangelist in this country because we don't have all the comforts and distractions of life...I don't know)

...But those who were scattered went about preaching the word." And it wasn't the apostles; verse 1 tells us they stayed in Jerusalem.

This is the primary way we do evangelism. That's how they did it in the early church. We leave here and we are scattered all over the Lehigh Valley encountering unbelievers that need the gospel. That's our job.

Both leaders, Timothy...do the work of an evangelist...so I'm challenged not to sit here at church all the time, but to spend some time in the community. That's why I've been hanging out at the local Panera doing work there so that I can rub shoulders with people.

Or making it a point to talk with neighbors so Jennifer is bringing our neighbor's children to VBS in 2 weeks.

That's why Pastor Mark is playing on a local soccer team. That's why Pastor Keith in Cape May is coaching his son's little league team. He's

got 3 or 4 families coming to His church now because of that. But all of us should be doing the same kinds of things.

I also think that the church can provide some opportunities to go and evangelize as well, I say some because the primary way is to be doing it on our own. But you also see in the NT people going in twos or groups to share the gospel with the world.

So we have been working hard to find opportunities for the church to get out there or at least we need to make you aware of things that are already being done. For example, you can get involved in CareNet and minister to moms and dads.

Or I think of Doug Chen who has coordinated certain days of the year for mission projects. Or our Nursing Home ministry where they evangelize and build up the saints who are there. VBS is in 2 weeks, a great outreach to those in the community.

Or I think of our latest partnership with a couple of dear brothers who attend here that are involved in what's called the Bridge Ministry. Many of our elders have been going, myself included.

It's a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel and help feed the poor in down town Easton. And we actually signed up for August 15 for Ebenezer Church to run the entire ministry that night, so if you are interested in something like that, see myself or Shawn Van Doren.

In my opinion, I think we are moving in a good direction, a good balance between the edification of the saints, the stuff we do here inside the church, what we talked about last week, and then evangelizing the world, doing some stuff out there.

The elders have been taking this seriously, talking about other creative ways to reach our immediate neighbors, or the Lehigh Valley, we have been talking with other BFC churches about a potential church plant in Forks Township.

And beyond that...the world, we certainly love and support our missionaries who are in the states or over the pond spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus command was to go...go and do what? What did he say next?

“...make disciples of all nations...”

Jesus wants disciples. Jesus wants more than a raised hand when I was 5 years old, but then my life from then on looks more like an unbeliever than a believer. I’m pretty sure that was me. I’m pretty sure I answered an altar call or raised my hand when I was young...

...but I was not born again, a true disciple until my early 20’s. Now I’m not talking about the person who gave their life to Christ, and went backslidden for a time. The Holy Spirit was probably in that person nagging them to come back.

Now I go here because the word for disciple means to believe and to learn. Meaning those who truly believe will evidence some kind of desire to learn and obey even if it’s small growth. Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.”

Because you are giving evidence of true conversion.

You have to understand there will be those who say Lord Lord but are not truly the Lord’s (John 6:66). 2 weeks ago someone asked Pastor Tim what he meant by the term Lordship Salvation. This is exactly what we are talking about.

Here’s what it means and I think it is essential to the gospel.

It means that I don’t come to Jesus with the idea that he is just my Savior into heaven and I get a free pass out of hell and I can go on living the way that I’ve always lived and then later I’ll submit to Him and obey. I’ll make him Lord later.



When that happens, I question whether salvation really happened in the first place because a truly saved person who now has the Spirit of God inside of them, will evidence some kind of movement toward the things of Christ and away from their old life.

That's the difference between the tax collector who followed Christ, and the rich young ruler who wanted eternity but didn't want to give up the old way of living. That's not conversion.

And conversion is not just intellectual ascent. I believe in Jesus. So do the demons, but the question is, is there an aspect of repentance as well, a turning to God and away from sin.

Mark Dever calls this the suicide of the church because he believes there are tons of people sitting in our pews who are not truly converted.

Which is why he says that one of the marks of a healthy church is a proper **understanding** of true biblical conversion. Jesus preached true biblical conversion right away when he said, "Repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15).

So Dever writes, "Here's what repentance and faith look like, the two go together many times in the Scripture. Both are a part of conversion. It says we turn to God from our sin, we receive Christ and we rely on him alone as the all sufficient Savior. The NT is filled with pictures of sinners leaving their sin, receiving Christ, and relying upon him."

Both Savior and Lord, doesn't mean they don't sin anymore, it means they "turn, trust, and follow. That's conversion."

It means that our hearts have been replaced, our minds have been transformed, the Spirit of God is now in us...not perfected...but change has happened.

**Which** also means that if we are going to evangelize and make true disciples, we need to present to them the full gospel of repentance and

faith. Not an incomplete gospel that leaves out the tough stuff like sin, wrath, and judgment, and taking up your cross. There's a cost involved.

The gospel is not only "God has a wonderful plan for your life." It's primarily about a bloody God who gave his life to give you eternal life and turn the wrath of God away from you because you deserve his wrath for your crimes against himself.

That's good news, God the judge now becomes God your Father because Jesus took on your sin and was punished in your place. And not only that, he clothes you with his perfect righteousness and earns you a place in his heaven where you will receive an inheritance.

That's good news. And that same message and mandate is ours today. It is still the mission of the church to spread that good news.

Listen the word go is actually better translated as "having gone" meaning it was always assumed that the church was going to do this. Go and make disciples of all nations...

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." end of verse 19. Appropriate for today, isn't it.

Baptize literally means to immerse in water. Now please hear this, being baptized does not save you. It's one of the things that you do because you are saved.

So in the Scripture, you always see baptism immediately following salvation.

It's closely connected so Peter would say to his audience when they heard the gospel and wanted to be saved, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now if baptism was required for salvation, the thief on the cross would not be in paradise, but Jesus said that he would be. What baptism does is give testimony that you are saved and that you belong to Christ.

It represents your union with him. That his history is our history. Romans 6 says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

Going down into the water symbolizes our old sinful selves being buried.

Christ took our sin upon himself and buried it in the tomb, but then he conquered it once and for all and walked out. So we who belong to him, bury our old lives of sin and live a new life, symbolized by the coming up out of the water. New life, resurrection life.

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Praise God for the 10 people who are obeying the Lord Jesus Christ in believer’s baptism this morning.

If you think 10 is a big number, how about the number after Peter preached his message. Could you imagine, “Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3000 souls.” God do that here! I would love to see that.

Now listen...

If anyone ever questions the Trinity, show them this passage. And you know what else is neat. We are not only in union with Christ, we are in union with the entire Godhead. In the name (which is singular by the way, not names) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We belong to them all.

Now, here is where a lot of evangelistic efforts have dropped the ball. We are not only to go after converts and record how many people have accepted Christ, we are to teach them as well.

This is where I appreciate crusades that emphasize “follow up.” Make sure you plug into a good church. **This** feeds off of last week’s message. The Lord gave evangelists to bring the people in and he gave shepherd’s and teachers to grow them up.

These are the two prongs of the three fold mission of the church...worship God, edify the saints (teach them to obey my commands), and evangelize the world (go and make disciples).

Obviously, we know that part of discipleship is being a lifelong learner who learns the commands of God and does them. Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.” Or he will obey my commands.

Paul would write to the **Romans**, “Though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.” That’s a disciple of Jesus Christ. And a disciple loves to sit under everything that Jesus has commanded.

In other words, a love for the whole counsel of God being taught.

And lastly we find that tremendous promise from our Lord at the end of verse 20...”**And** behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

His eye is always on us, his presence is always with us, the Spirit of God is in us, his power is with us until that great and glorious day when the Lord Jesus Christ will return. But then...

I’m not sure you ever thought about this, but then for all eternity long, the souls that have been saved, and maybe God has used us for reaching some of those souls, but the souls that have been saved are going to cry out thank you forever...giving praise and glory and honor to Jesus.

The Apostle John saw in his vision, Revelation chapter 7, “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Angels will be crying out “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

Let that be our motivation for evangelizing the lost. For Jesus Christ to get the glory that he deserves from a whole lot of people, for how great he is, for how great his redemption is, for the depth of his love toward us in this that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Worthy is the lamb who was slain. It’s time to tell more people about the slain lamb. On the back of the sermon guide is a list of opportunities to tell more and more people about the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If you want more information, you can talk with Shawn Van Doren or any one of the elders.