Good morning everyone, let me open by praying

PRAY

If you are pretty new to our church, you may not have seen our mission statement before.

Our mission statement which is up on the screen is really what shapes everything we do here at Church@the Peak.

What that means is that any time we do ministry, be it our mid-week growth groups or mainly music, SRE at this school or Youth group on Friday evenings, all of these ministry activities are done with our mission statement as the main focus.

One of the cool things about being serving you here as mission pastor is that I get to hear all the great stories about how people here are doing exactly what our mission statement says.

It’s pretty clear that you guys are on board with our mission statement to live to be and make disciples of Jesus.

But it got me thinking about what other churches have as their mission statements.

So I did a bit of research on a few churches my mates run in some of the hardest places in the world.

At Niddrie community church in Scotland, which is located right in the middle of one of Edinburgh’s govt housing schemes, they have a mission statement that says “Glorifying God, preaching the Gospel and making disciples of Jesus Christ.”

It was a similar feel for my mate Mario and his church the Reformed Faith Mission situated in an area known as Hell’s kitchen in South Africa.

Even Shem at Hamo south Gospel church in Newcastle has a mission statement that is aimed at making disciples of people in his community.

It’s reassuring to see so many other churches around the world have the same focus as we do of making disciples of Jesus. It confirms that as a church we are on the right track in what we focus our energy and resources on.

But as we know, there are lots of other things that we could focus our attention on, things like feeding the poor, looking after the weak, caring for widows and orphans.

These things are also good things to do which raises a question.

Why have we chosen to go with the hard work of making disciples as our mission statement at this church instead of all the other good stuff we could have chosen?

You know this question of why we have chosen our current mission statement is a really good question to ask ourselves today.

Because if we can reflect upon and better understand our mission statement and why it’s important then we will most likely get a better understanding of how we are to do the things that will help us live out our mission statement.

So to help us understand our mission statement, which is to live to be and make disciples then I want to have a good look at the great commission that Jesus gave which is where we get our mission statement from, and try and answer two questions that I think are super important.

The questions I want to answer are

From the passage what does Jesus say a disciple is and secondly what does Jesus say disciple making is?

Firstly though, what does Jesus say a disciple of him, is?

**POINT 1**

In our passage, Jesus says a disciple is two things, they are a person who has been baptised in the name of the Father, son and Holy spirit and they are a person who is then being taught how to obey all of Jesus commands.

Let’s have closer look at both of these things.

Firstly Jesus says a disciple is someone who is baptized

Now in Jesus day baptism was a very clear public declaration that a person had become a follower of Jesus. That they had died to their old life and were now born again into a life with Jesus as Lord.

Just like people do now, these early converts were being baptized because they were convicted of the truth that we can read in passages like Romans 3:23 which says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.

And also because they understood that Jesus was offering them Hope, hope not found in the world but in Gods act of Grace that we can read about in passages like John 3:16

But being a convert of Jesus and being baptized was only half of what Jesus says a disciple is.

The second thing that Jesus describes a disciple as being in our passage, is a baptized follower who is being taught to be obedient to all his commands.

In other words Jesus is making it clear that it’s not just enough to be baptized into his name and to become a follower of him. Jesus says a disciple must also show obedience in the way they follow all of his commands.

Let me illustrate why I think obedience Jesus focus on obedience is really important.

Imagine if I tried to build my marriage with Kate on the single premise of not annoying her.

Now as much as I’m sure that Kate would appreciate me being less annoying than I am, I am also certain that she wants more than just a flat mate who doesn’t leave his undies on the floor of the bathroom.

I know that as my wife, Kate wants to be reminded that I love her.

And so being obedient as a husband means that I don’t just say that I love her, but that I show her I love her through my actions.

Actions that sometimes look like making her crispy bacon that’s been burnt to within an inch of its life on a Saturday morning, making her a cup of tea in her favourite china tea cup instead of a the chunky one I like, holding her hand when we go to the shops, considering her first in all things.

These actions are things I can do to help Kate know I love her.

Now I’m not saying I get all these things right, but I know that when I am being obedient to the things she likes, I know she feels valued and loved by me.

Being a disciple of Jesus is just the same. It’s not enough to just say you love him.

Being a disciple of Jesus means we are people who show our love for him through our obedience to the things he loves us to do.

In John Chapter 14 Jesus connects obedience to love like this, he says in verse 15, “If you love me, you will keep my commands” and verse 24, “He who does not love me will not obey my teaching”.

My last comments on obedience are these.

Number 1, Our salvation is not paid for by anything that we do, Jesus alone paid the price for our sins when he went to the cross. He died the death we deserve and pays the price we can’t possibly pay so that we can have a right relationship with the Father.

Obedience to Jesus is just an active response to this truth and adds nothing to our own salvation.

Number 2, Obedience to Jesus might be hard, but consider this, when Jesus showed obedience to his Father, it resulted in his life being taken, it resulted in him having to give up his relationship with his Father, it resulted in him giving up his freedom just so you could have yours.

If we are struggling to be obedient, we should remember the obedience that Jesus gives us an example of.

Obedience that is costly and sometimes takes enormous effort.

Let’s move on to my second point and find out what Jesus says is disciple making.

What Jesus says making disciples is.

**POINT 2**

Jesus suggests that if discipleship is to happen then the following four things should be evident.

Number 1 that the person making disciples, Goes.

The word Go suggests an activity or an effort that is required. It’s not a passive act of waiting for people to turn up but an intentional act for disciple makers to go to people that don’t yet know the good news about Jesus.

It’s a little crazy to think that our friends and family would just turn up here at church unannounced or without an invitation or that a non-Christian friend would bring a bible to a coffee catch up and say I was thinking we could read the bible together.

Introducing Jesus to people means we have to make the first step of going to them.

Number 2, Jesus then tells his disciples, where to go, he says that disciple making is to all nations.

Have a look at this map on the screen, it shows how Christianity in the first 400 years after Jesus gave this very command in Matthew 28 had expanded out from Jerusalem.

It shows us, that when Christians are obedient to Jesus commands to go out to all nations, that it has a dramatic effect on the good news of Jesus going out into our world.

Now as we read Jesus command to make disciples to all nations, it would be easy to think that Jesus wants the disciples and us to become missionaries that physically go out to every nation.

And although this not untrue, it’s not the only point Jesus is making to his disciples.

What he is also trying to say is this, from this moment onwards, all peoples, from all nations should have the opportunity to hear the good news that salvation has come to them.

He is shifting the disciples focus of only sharing the Gospel and making disciples in Jerusalem which he had previously commanded them to do, to now expand the message of salvation to all peoples on earth.

What that means for us is this, The good news is to go out to everyone, that includes your friends, your family, your work colleagues. Doesn’t matter where they live or what country they were born in.

The gospel message is freely available to all people and we are to take it to them.

Number 3, Jesus commands his disciples to Baptize those people who have heard the truth, repented of their sins and who have made Jesus Lord of their life.

In the book of Acts in chapter 8 we get a very good example of this when Philip met an Ethiopian who was on his way home from Jerusalem. The story tells us that Phillip helped the man understand a passage of scripture from the book of Isaiah that he was reading but was confused about.

As the Ethiopian came to understand that the passage was talking about Jesus he gave his life to Jesus and before the two parted ways, Philip baptised him in a nearby river.

Baptism is an important sign and public declaration of being washed clean and something that Jesus command all disciples to do when they become followers of him.

Number 4. The last thing that Jesus says that disciples are to do when making disciples is that they are to teach them to be obedient to everything that he has commanded.

Which has the effect of making disciples that make disciples that make disciples and so on and so on

Hence why the Christian church now is in such a state of growth in many parts of the world.

To illustrate what discipleship looks like when it is done well, I want to share with you my own discipleship experience.

When I was 21, I was introduced to 2 Christian families that without me knowing, were ready and willing to make disciples.

They worked together to build a strong relationship with me through reading the bible one to one, doing weekly bible study and by inviting me to share all of life with them.

The result of their active combined discipleship effort with me was that I was shown from the bible that I was a sinner that needed to repent and follow Jesus who had died for me.

I was then walked through the process of baptism with them

When I was baptized, they celebrated it with me.

And the disciple making didn’t stop there, they kept teaching me, shaping me, correcting me so that I would know how to follow the commands of Jesus.

These 2 families were essentially being obedient to Jesus great commission, even though I was an unknown quantity for them, it would have been so easy to just read the bible and wait and see how things panned out, but they didn’t do that.

They invested their time and efforts to open the bible and show me Christs love for me and how to respond to that love.

My experience of disciple ship is long term and all of life and this is what Jesus is calling us to do..

My last point this morning is really an encouragement to you all, as I have already said, one of the reasons I love being Mission pastor here is because I’m always hearing stories about how you are doing discipleship.

When I hear about even our youngest members doing discipleship like we heard this morning I am greatly encouraged

And to further encourage you in this I want to share what I believe are a few things that hold us back and also a few things that Jesus says that might encourage us.

**POINT 3**

So what is stopping us

In verse 17, notice how the disciples react when they see Jesus, it says that when they saw Jesus they worshipped him but some doubted, the word doubt in this passage refers more to an act of hesitation rather than un-belief.

I reckon we also hesitate when it come to Jesus and following his commands to make disciples. Our hesitation though comes through us either being disobedient or through having a lack of confidence in our own ability.

Disobedience to Jesus commands that shows itself though the excuses we make and as we prioritise ourselves and our own desires over his commands.

Disobedience is just as much a response to Jesus as being obedient to him, it’s just a response that shows a lack of love for him.

Lack of confidence which also leads to disobedience, comes as we convince ourselves that disciple making requires some magical amount of ability and knowledge.

We say things like, I could never do that because I don’t have the skills or training, I just don’t know how to answer peoples questions.

But here is what is wrong with this kind of thinking.

The work of making disciples is not dependant on our ability or knowledge, making disciples of Jesus is not about us, it’s about Jesus.

Having this attitude of mis-placed confidence for the need for us to have all the ability is basically placing more importance on us and less on God. Which is a very dangerous thing to do because it leaves him out of the picture.

But listen to what Jesus says about himself that rebukes this idea completely.

verse 18*, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*

This statement from Jesus announces to his disciples and us that he is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords and that he has all the authority and power.

Jesus is not someone we can fit into a shoebox sized idea of what is possible. He is more powerful and has more authority than we can imagine or understand.

You see, when we misplace where our confidence lies and give it to ourselves, we quickly realise that we are not up to the task.

But placing our confidence in Jesus and in his ability that he alone does the hard work when it comes to discipleship is the right way to view where our confidence comes from.

And when we realise that our role in discipleship is just to go, to be active and that Jesus will do the hard work of changing peoples hearts then the pressure is lifted from our shoulders.

Jesus confirms this idea for us in verse 20, he says.

*“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”*

This last verse hardly suggests we are doing the work of discipleship alone. It says the opposite, Jesus is always with us, at every step, every hard or anxious moment, every time we can’t find the right words, every time we think we have failed.

Friends we have a tender and loving God that doesn’t leave us, he walks beside us even when our anxiety is high and our confidence is low.

Friends Jesus has given us the great commission which is the centre of everything we do here at church.

How might you respond to this great commission to go and make disciples, especially as we come into a busy and active time of reaching our community.

Tom made some really excellent points last week about what parts we all have to play in and when someone comes to church for the first time here.

And his reminder to us applies to making disciples.

To make disciples, lots of us will need to meet and invite our friends and family into church so they can hear the gospel or to read the bible one to one with you.

Making disciples will take lots of us to be welcoming as those guests walk through the door for the first time. That welcome will need to extend past the first visit into lunch dinner invites.

Making disciples means we will have to invite people into our homes and lives, it will be long term.

Making disciples will take lots of effort and patience as you teach people what it means to be a Christian, what Baptism is all about and as you keep encouraging them to remain obedient to Jesus commands. Especially the one about making disciples.

We will have a very focussed opportunity to do just that at the end of March, between now and our reflection time why not think about being someone who says I want to be part of disciple making in our church.

Let’s pray.