CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

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.

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

MAIN TEXT
Mark 16:14-18

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01

Sermon Transcript

We're so glad to have you joining us for today's message. I'm Jason Mayfield. I'm the pastor here at Saraland Church. We've got some boxes back here from—these are signs for signage we're putting up in the building. And I just wanted to welcome you to today's message. Listen, I wanted to share this with you. We appreciate you watching online. And I wanted to let you know that over the next several weeks, we're going to be working on making our weekly video upload of the message much better. We've got some cameras that just arrived that we're going to be putting in, and we're going to be training volunteers to work our cameras so we can provide you with a better online viewing experience of the weekly message, sharing with you what God is saying to us right here at Saraland Church.

Hey, if you're in the Mobile County area, I just wanted to invite you to join us in person right here at Saraland Church at 907 Shelton Beach Road in Saraland, Alabama. It's 907 Shelton Beach Road. We've got plenty of room for you. We've got plenty of parking for you. We've got ministry for your kids, and we would love to meet you. Come join us Sunday at 10:30 AM. Today, I'm talking about the Great Commission, and why don't we stop waiting and just jump right into it right now. Amen. So again, I just want to prepare you. This is going to be a slightly heavy message this morning.

I am going to be a little bit heavier than I normally am. I will let you go ahead and start turning to Mark chapter 16. I am going to be a little bit heavier. Have y'all ever seen a movie where the dad is having trouble getting the teenagers to wake up, and then he goes in and he dumps like a bucket of water on them in the bed, and they wake up? Okay, I just need y'all to know, I'm about to preach a Holy Ghost water bucket in here this morning, and I am going to pour it out. This is a wake-up call. But as I was telling them Wednesday night in our team night meeting—by the way, if you haven't been to Wednesday nights, I'm telling you, they are super fun.

I was telling them Wednesday night that I will get more and more fun as the rest of the year progresses. Okay? I get more inspirational. I get more informational, and by the time we get to the end of the year, I'm handing out candy canes when I'm preaching. Amen. So it's going to be good. Hallelujah. So here we go. This is a wake-up call. Mark chapter 16, starting in verse 14. Here I am telling y'all to flip there, and I haven't even flipped there yet. Here we go. Mark chapter 16, verse 14.

> **MARK 16:14-18** ESV
>
> 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."

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We're not that spirit-filled. Amen. This morning, I want to talk to you on the subject of the Great Commission. That's the title of my message today, the Great Commission. For the next four weeks, we are going to be in a series, which is one of the values that we're introducing to the church, and the value is this. We are relentlessly driven by the mission. We are relentlessly driven by the mission. If you get around me for a little while, you will notice that when I get my eyes on the Great Commission, the mission of seeing lost people saved, my eyes turn red.

I am intensely focused on this. This is an anointing on my life that I'm hoping drips off of me onto you. It should bother us greatly when people are not saved. Not because they aren't like us, but because it's not good for them. People need the gospel. And so we are relentlessly driven by the mission. I don't know about you, but my story personally is the local church changed my life. It changed my life. I came from a dysfunctional home and an unsafe environment, and I ended up in the church around 12 years old, and my life was formed. My life was changed.

My life was bettered. My life was increased and improved, and it prospered because I was rooted and grounded in the local church. I was rooted and grounded in the local church. But here's what I need you to know. People only get rooted when the soil is moved around. There has to be a little disruption if you want to make disciples. You have to disrupt the soil a little bit. How many of you have seen the movie Jesus Revolution? I'm going to tell you, now, I'm not a big Christian movie goer because they ain't all that great, but this movie's fantastic. This Jesus Revolution movie, it's incredible, and it's about a man named Greg Laurie.

I'm going to just kind of give you the synopsis of what happened in Greg Laurie's life. In the late 1960s, Chuck Smith—who some of you probably have commentaries from Chuck Smith. I know y'all look at Chuck Smith's stuff all the time. But in the late 1960s, Chuck Smith, pastor of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, was watching the hippie movement explode around him. I think I've got some former hippies in here right now, in Jesus' name. And kids with long hair, barefoot, strung out on drugs, and searching for meaning. Most churches at the time were pushing them away, but Chuck made a radical decision.

"We're not going to lock the doors on these people. We're going to change the way we do ministry so they know they're welcome." He let them come in barefoot. He welcomed the rock music and guitars, and he built a church that was less about tradition and more about transformation. One of those young hippies was Greg Laurie. At 17 years old, he was lost in the drug culture, addicted, empty, and searching. When he wandered into that movement, he encountered the gospel and the love of a church that made space for him. Greg gave his life to Christ and experienced a complete transformation.

Today, Greg Laurie pastors Harvest Christian Fellowship, one of the largest churches in America, and he leads the Harvest Crusades, where over six million people have heard the gospel in person, and more than 500,000 have made decisions for Christ. He's preached in stadiums, written books, and even made films, and it all traces back to a local church that dared to change so people could be reached. The Great Commission doesn't happen by accident. It happens when people like Chuck Smith say, "I'm going to introduce a little disruption to the soil of our church so that we can make disciples get rooted into this place."

And I just want you to know it's easy to point to the results that happen in preachers' lives. It's easy to point to a Greg Laurie or for me to tell you my testimony, but let me tell you, we've heard story after story after story over 21 years of ministry of people whose lives have been radically transformed because they got into a local church that cared about them. We have to disrupt the soil a little bit. So this morning, I'm going to disrupt that soil. That's what the rest of this message is going to be. I've got a rake. It's called a Holy Ghost rake, and I'm about to get in here and do a little work.

So you start writing these down. Number one, the gospel is for all people. The gospel is for all people. Mark 16, verse 15, we just read it, says, "And he said to them, 'Go into all the world.'"

> **ACTS 1:8** ESV
>
> 8 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."

Acts chapter 1, verse 8—any good Pentecostal could quote this out of the King James, mind you: "And after that the Holy Ghost has come upon thee, ye shall receive power. And you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the—" We're talking about all people. Not just the people here, not just the people here. All people. Everybody say all people.

So when I talk about all people, I'm talking about every age. Every age. We have another value that I'm going to preach on at the end of the year. I'm going to do a short series on this, but at the end of the year, I'm going to preach on us being a generationally intentional church. We are generationally intentional. And I'm going to talk about it a lot right now—well, we'll talk about it at the end of the year. But I just want you to know, I want this to be a church that works for everybody from the nursery to the nursing home. This is for everybody.

Secondly, I also mean that we are for all people. We're a church for all people, people in every class, every class of person. Another one of the values I'm going to teach you on next year is we are honoring of all people. We're honoring of all people. And so we're going to be a church for people in every class. I want everybody in this church that lives all the way from the trailer park to Park Avenue. I want to see everybody. In fact, Proverbs chapter 22 says that the rich and the poor come together, for the Lord is maker of them all.

> **PROVERBS 22:2** ESV
>
> 2 The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.

Somebody say amen.

So we're honoring of all people, and we're going to teach people in every class that you can still have class. Amen. And then the third thing, when I'm talking about all people, I'm talking about every race. Every race. Every race. This is a major Bible issue. And this is actually a major issue in this area. And I want you to know that just walking into the Mobile area, I can feel something in the air that I'm uncomfortable with. There's a spiritual thing here around race and division. It's not good. We're going to have to deal with it. And I'm going to be the preacher that's going to do it. Amen.

I do want to let y'all know that I just moved from what is possibly, if not the—it is definitely in the top 20 most integrated churches in Alabama. Like, we had everybody. Everybody. And let me tell you, church is more fun with everybody.

Church is better with everybody. You might as well praise the Lord right there. That's a good place. So I've made some comments in some different meetings leading up to this about how we're going to have people in the church at some point who don't look like us and don't look like you.

And I've heard some rumblings—nothing egregious that I felt like I had to deal with, but I've heard a couple of things. A handful of people have gave me the secondhand information. It's funny on this stuff. Nobody going to give you the firsthand information, but I got some secondhand information on, "Well, what does he mean by that?" Well, let me just explain it to you as clearly as I can. When I go to Publix, I see white folks, black folks, Indian folks, and Hispanic folks. When I go to Walmart, I see white folks, black folks, Indian folks, Hispanic folks.

When I go pick Jocelyn up from marching band practice, I see white kids, black kids, Indian kids, Hispanic kids. We were at the football game the other night and I had white folks and black folks and Hispanic folks and Indian folks all around me cheering for this team on the field. One lady had a cowbell. She was having a good time. I think her baby was on the field. We have all these different people, but folks, look around you. When I come in here, I don't see it right now. I don't see it right now. But we're building a Jesus-centered, spirit-filled church for all people.

Somebody ought to praise him right there. That's a good spot. I just think if we shop together and we go to school together, then we ought to go to church together. James Baldwin said—and this was 60 years ago—he said that America is the most segregated on Sunday at high noon. And in 60 years, we've come a long way, but that has not changed. That is still the same. And we're going to see that change right here. [worship]. And so I think we ought to all be worshiping together. Amen. Now let me encourage those of you who are struggling with this.

I just want to let you know, you need to get comfortable with this idea, because it's not just going to show up in your church. One of your grandbabies is going to bring this into your kitchen. Get mad at your pastor. You don't want to have a screaming match with your granddaughter in the kitchen. So go ahead and take it out on me. I'll be fine with that. But I do want to let you know this: this is right, and this is where we are.

> **NUMBERS 12:1-2** ESV
>
> 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.

Numbers chapter 12 says this: "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman."

By the way, Cushite—a modern area you could attach it to is, she's a Nubian woman. She was—let me tell you about Nubian people. They aren't just black. They are very black. They are Wesley Snipes black. You know what I'm saying? They are black. Okay. They are dark, and they had a problem with her because of that. And verse two says, "And they said, 'Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?'" And I'm going to tell you what worries me here: "And the Lord heard it." God does not look favorably on any type of racism.

He does not look favorably on othering. I'm just telling you right now, the Lord looked at Miriam—and the only reason they didn't do it with Aaron is because Aaron had a job that had to be done—but he looked at Miriam and he put leprosy on her right there.

> **NUMBERS 12:9-10 ESV**
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> 9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. 10 When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.

This is not something that the Lord deals favorably with. So let me be clear, because I know some of y'all are asking this question and you're wondering. And so let me just assure you that I am not trying—let me just talk to the Southerners in the room here for a moment, by the way, of which I am one.

Someone told me I sounded like a Yankee the other day, but I'm from Birmingham, Alabama. I grew up going to lunch in Hueytown. Okay? I'm one of you folks. Okay. And, but I need you to hear me. I know some of y'all are going, "Is he going to try to build a black church?" And let me just assure you, I'm not trying to build a black church, but I sure as heck am not trying to build a white church. That's a good place to give him praise. And I will let you know a little vision moving forward, something that I am eyeballing, because I'm always looking at the people the Lord's giving me. I'm always looking and saying, who's on my property?

And I'm going to tell you, I've got nights where I've got nothing but Hispanic folks back behind my building playing soccer. And I want you to know I'm eyeballing doing a Spanish translation for our services so we can open up our church to people who do not speak English as the first language. It's easy. It's cheap. It's missional. And I'm probably going to do it in 2026. So you got a couple of months to work up on your Spanish, y'all. Amen. Here we go. Number two, we're in it for the long haul. We're in it for the long haul. Mark chapter 16, verses 16 through 18 says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they'll cast out demons, they'll speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents with their hands, if they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them, they'll lay their hands on the sick and they will recover." What I see when I read this right here is that people get saved and then they go through a process. People get saved and they go through a process. Now, on one hand, we are talking about a tangible process. If you've been around me for any length of time, you know that I'm kind of a systems-oriented individual.

I think about all of the steps that people need to walk through. And so we are going to have a tangible process here that when someone gets saved, we're going to send them on a journey to know the Lord fully. So that is a priority for me. Outside of that though, there's also like an existential process that people have to go through. People are dealing with their own stuff. If you're dealing with your own stuff, just raise your hand this morning. And yeah, that's me. I've got some stuff I'm dealing with. And so everybody's got their own process that they're going through.

And let me just tell this Pentecostal church something this morning: instant transformation is rare. Now, we throw instant transformation on the stage. We shoot videos about it. We tell everyone about it. Praise the Lord for his work. I'm grateful for it. I'm grateful when somebody comes to the altar and they get down on their face and they get up, and they came in a drug addict, and when they stood up there, they have no more temptation to do drugs. I'm so grateful for the power of God in that way. But let me tell you this. I'm also grateful for the guy who goes to the altar a drug addict, stands up a drug addict, but the Holy Ghost has started to work on it.

And if we'll just give him some time, he's going to carry out his purpose in that person. Hallelujah. So there are going to be people that give their lives to Jesus and then they will not improve at the rate that you want them to. In James chapter two, this is where we get the phrase "faith without works is dead."

JAMES 2:21-24 ESV

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that
faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled
that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of
God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

And James says this, and then he gives an illustration involving Abraham. And he talks about Abraham believing God, being counted righteous, and then offering his son Isaac, being willing to offer him as a sacrifice. He does not—praise the Lord—but he's willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

And that was his works that completed his faith. And then it goes on and it says that he was called a friend of God. And we read that and we think, okay, this is Abraham. He believed God, but he also had to work it out. Well, I got to looking at this one day and I realized that Abraham believes God, is counted righteous.

GENESIS 15:6 ESV

6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

It's another 40 years until Abraham offers Isaac.

GENESIS 22:1-14 ESV

1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take
your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt
offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his
donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering
and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and
saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will
go over there and worship and come again to you." 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid
it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And
Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the
wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a
burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. 9 When they came to the place of which God had
told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the
altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But
the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He
said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have
not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold,
behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up
as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it
is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

He was righteous the entire time. He wasn't waiting for this moment to be righteous. He's been righteous the entire time. Here's what's even better. He was called a friend of God.

That's in Isaiah.

> **ISAIAH 41:8** ESV
>
> 8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

That didn't even happen in his lifetime. That was hindsight. So here's what I've committed to do. If you'll put your faith in Jesus Christ, and you're trying to work through some problems and work through some issues, I'll give you 40 years before I make a huge deal out of it. I think it's important in a Holy Ghost church that we remember that the Holy Ghost has to do the work and we are not the Holy Ghost. Amen. Look at your neighbor and say, "He's talking to you right now. Ain't talking to you." Number three. Number three, the consequences are massive.

The consequences are massive. We're talking about heaven or hell, life or death. Mark chapter 16, verse 16 says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

> **JUDE 1:20-23** ESV
>
> 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.

Jude verse 20 says, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire." That's the mission we're on. We're snatching people out of the fire.

Hallelujah. If we believe what Jesus said, that you must be born again to inherit the kingdom of God, then we can't ignore this.

> **JOHN 3:3** ESV
>
> 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

And this is a statistic that blew my mind. Within 20 miles of this church, within 20 miles of this building—if you took a 20-mile string and you just wrapped it all the way around, 20 miles in every direction—there are approximately 312,000 people who are spiritually lost. I'm not talking about the total population. I'm talking about statistics tell us that in that zone, in our gospel zone, there's 312,000 people that if they were to die today, or if the eastern sky were to part, they would bust a devil's hell wide open.

This is serious, serious stuff. For years, preachers have told a story. I think John Maxwell used it in one of his books. It's kind of a folklore kind of story amongst pastors, but we tell a story of the pastor who moved the piano, and the story

goes kind of like this. There was a pastor who went to a church in North Georgia and he had a piano right in the middle of the room that was in the way of everything. And so he moved the piano over to the side of the room, in the place that it ought to be. And the church drove him out of town. Drove him out. Got rid of the preacher because he moved the piano.

A couple of years later, he's driving through that town and he thinks, let me go see how the new pastor's doing. He goes in to see the new pastor. And as he's walking to the pastor's office, he sees in the sanctuary that the piano is in the right spot where he had left it. And he thought, there's no way they didn't move it back. And so he goes to the pastor's office and he says, "Brother pastor, what happened with this piano? Did they not move it back to the center of the room?" And he goes, "Oh no, I heard about what happened with you. As soon as you left, that piano was back in the center of the room."

And he goes, "Well, how did you move it?" He goes, "Oh, I'd come in here every night and I'd move it one inch. Come in every night and I'd move it one inch. And by the time it got to the place it needed to be, nobody had ever noticed that it got moved. It took a long time, but I didn't have any trouble. I didn't have any problems. And I'm still here pastoring the church." Now, we tell this story like this is the gold standard of church leadership. We've taught this like it's the job of the pastor to come into a church and not disrupt the soil, not create a little discomfort.

It's the job of the pastor to come in, keep everybody happy, everybody comfortable, everybody just keep the train chugging along. And there's some good wisdom to that. There is some good wisdom to that, because I'll tell you what, incrementalism—doing it real slow, making changes real slow, confronting things real slow—I'll just tell you, it's good for attendance and it's good for income. But how many people go to hell every inch? Every inch. "I'm going to wait to do it. I'll just do an inch." Six people die in this area every day. Statistically, six people in Mobile County die every day.

Six, 12, 18, 24, 32. I got to stop before my math messes up on me here. Suffice it to say, I was right. I knew I was, right? How many inches is a soul worth? How many inches? Where the apostle said "snatching some from the fire," we're upset over the song selection, or the chairs have gotten moved, or the lights have changed. I'll start talking about stuff I've actually done just in case it's rubbing you the wrong way. How many people? 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, talk to the next team that was coming in, kind of ease out of the chaos.

That morning though, she felt an internal push: check on room 418. The problem was, this was not her patient. This was not her floor. This was not her responsibility. She almost shrugged it off, almost waited until her coffee was finished, almost played it safe. But instead she stood up, a little uncomfortable, a little too early for her and out of her normal rhythm. She moved. As she turned the corner into 418, she found Mr. Robert Hale in the middle of a seizure, alone in his hospital bed. No nurse in the room, no monitors alerting yet. She hit the call button, cleared the area, and began to stabilize him with basic intervention while calling for a crash cart.

The team arrived within seconds and they were able to bring him back from the brink. Later, the attending physician pulled her aside and said, "If no one had been in that room in those exact seconds, we would have lost him. He did not have minutes. He had seconds." She wasn't the assigned nurse. She wasn't ready, but she was willing to set down her cup of coffee and go to room 418. And because of that, Robert Hale is still alive today. When people set their preferences aside, when people set their comfort aside, it changes lives. And I want y'all to know, I'm not unaware of this.

I know I can sound very direct and kind of no-nonsense on these issues. And I want you to know, I'm not trying to sound ugly. I'm not trying to sound rude. I'm not trying to sound unfeeling or uncaring. But folks, this is urgent. This is not a wait and see. This isn't a "we'll just give it a little while longer." This isn't "well, we'll just wait until, but we'll do something later." This is urgent. Earlier this year, we were living in Huntsville, Alabama. We were living in Madison, and our church was on the interstate that we lived off of.

So the church is on the interstate. We're on the interstate. It's about 15 minutes down the road west. And we have hurricanes—or, living in Florida and back in Sierra Leone, it's hurricanes and not tornadoes. We have tornadoes hit the ground over on the west side of Alabama and they start heading toward the church. Well, I'm trying to see, you know, if we're going to have church Sunday or not. And so I'm watching the news and these tornadoes are coming right down 565 and they pass the church. There's no issue with the church.

And I guess it was about two or three minutes, I realized, those are coming for us. Forget the church—that thing's about to hit me. And so I go over and start ripping stuff out of a closet and I'm telling the kids, I'm like, "Get in the closet, sit down. Here's a pillow, take your iPad, watch a thing. If something happened—" I'm one of them dads. It's like, if something happens, you be quiet and you do what you're— I'm getting intense. And I came off a little strong and aggressive and a little intense in that moment. But I'm going to tell you: everybody was safe.

Everybody was safe. Why? Because it was life or death. This wasn't a trip to the zoo. This wasn't swinging on a swing set. This was life or death.

> **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."

Mark two, verse 17 says, "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 to call not the righteous, but sinners.'" This is life or death. We have to put our feelings aside, our preferences aside. We have to put our history aside. And I just want you to know that over the next several weeks, I am going to be putting my foot on the accelerator to see us grow this church, to reach this city, because we need to see people saved and set free.

Amen. But not only am I going to do that this month, I'm going to be giving you some resources and some tools that are going to help you to fulfill your part in our Great Commission. And I want you to know this: in the next two weeks, I am going to announce something to you me and Ashleigh are working on. I'm going to announce a great opportunity that you can be a part of to see a great harvest in this area. But I'm not going to tell you about it right now. You have to come back to church if you want some stuff. Amen. But let me just say this. If we don't put a gospel church between people in this area and hell, they have no hope.

And I want you to hear something, and this may be unhealthy. I'm off the notes, by the way, so we'll be here another three hours. This may be a little unhealthy, but I need y'all to hear me. I love churches. I love pastors. In fact, it's weird to say it on a microphone, but there is an apostolic thing on my life. Pastors are my primary ministry—talking and encouraging and guiding, leading. I love pastors. I love people in the ministry. I really do. I love other churches. But the way that I believe we have to lead when we pastor a church in the community is as if we are the only hope.

I love other pastors. I love other churches. I don't know what that guy does with his schedule. I don't know what he does with his time. I don't know how serious he's taking stuff. I don't know how serious other churches—I don't know what other churches believe. I don't have time to figure out what doctrine every church holds. So what I know is that if somebody's going to do it—I don't know if they're going to do it, but I'm going to do it. I'm going to step up and I'm going to put a gospel church between people and a devil's hell. Hallelujah.

02

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
>
> 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
>
> [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
>
> [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
>
> 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
>
> 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

> **JUDE 1:20-23** ESV
>
> 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.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

MARK 16:14-18	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."

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

ACTS 1:8	8 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."
PROVERBS 22:2	2 The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.
NUMBERS 12:1-2	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.
JAMES 2:21-24	21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

ISAIAH 41:8	8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
JUDE 1:20-23	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.
MARK 2:17	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."

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

NUMBERS 12:9-10	9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. 10 When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.
GENESIS 15:6	6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

GENESIS 22:1-14

1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said,
"Here I am." 2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to
the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains
of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey,
and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for
the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On
the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then
Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over
there and worship and come again to you." 6 And Abraham took the wood of the
burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the
knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham,
"My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood,
but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for
himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.
9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar
there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on
top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to
slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said,
"Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on
the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not
withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and
looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And
Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his
son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said
to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

JOHN 3:3

3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see
the kingdom of God."

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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