
WE ARE THE CHURCH

Marks of a Healthy Church

SELFLESS MISSIONAL INVESTMENT

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on February 25, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Jesus unmistakably calls people to die. In His paradoxical call, Christ beckons sinners to lose something lesser in order to gain something greater. The life lived apart from Christ is death unto death. Sinners reap the bitter fruit of their wickedness in this life and in the life to come. But, the life given over to Christ is life unto life. The sinner who dies with Christ shall be raised with Him; and the one who lives on mission with Christ shall reap the savory rewards of a life well lived. In this message, we shall consider this call in light of the Great Commission and our selfless investment in the mission of the local and global church.

MESSAGE MADE SIMPLE

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:24).

While most people in our western culture have not had to consider what it might feel like to be persecuted unto death, every Christian everywhere must resolve to die for the sake of knowing and possessing Christ. I hope you’ll take the time to re-read and consider that sentence.

The unmistakable call of Christ is to die. The thought of such a thing is so repugnant to us that we are naturally inclined to do anything to avoid it. I mean... who wants to die? However, in this paradoxical call, Christ beckons sinners to lose something lesser in order to gain something greater.

The life lived apart from Christ is death unto death. Sinners reap the bitter fruit of their wickedness in this life and in the life to come. But, the life given over to Christ is life unto life. The sinner who dies with Christ shall be raised with Him; and the one who lives on mission with Christ shall reap the savory rewards of a life well lived. Whether it is long or short, may we live worthwhile lives for Christ.

LUKE 9:23-26 (ESV)

23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

THE POINT I’M AIMING AT TODAY

Healthy Churches are selflessly invested in the Great Commission.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

- (1) CHRIST CALLS SINNERS TO DIE**
- (2) CHRIST CALLS ALL CHRISTIANS TO LIVE ON MISSION**
- (3) HEALTHY CHURCHES HAVE A MISSIONAL PERSPECTIVE**
- (4) APPLICATION: DON’T WASTE YOUR LIFE**

(1) CHRIST CALLS SINNERS TO DIE

- Christ finds us (sinners) hopelessly dead.
 - “**You were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**” (Ephesians 2:1–3).
 - ***There are only two kinds of people in the world...***
 - ***The walking dead, and the used-to-be dead***
 - The walking dead are:
 - Worldly (v2) – interested in the things of the world: self-gratification, fame, temporary treasures
 - Disobedient (v2) – uninterested in submitting to God’s commands
 - Pleasure-driven (v3) – “*If it feels good, do it!*” or “*It feels so right, how can it be wrong?*”
 - Children of Wrath (v3) – hopelessly barreling towards divine and impartial justice
 - ***Friends, does any of this describe you?***
 - I’m not asking if you are a member of a church or if you have been baptized...
 - I’m asking if you see yourself in the mirror of God’s word this morning.
 - Would you say that ***your desires*** are primarily set on ***worldly things*** or ***godly things***?

- Would you say that your thoughts and actions are *largely influenced* by a *desire* to *obey God* or are God's commands *pretty far from* your *interest*?
 - Would you say that you act primarily on *what you feel* is *morally* "right/wrong" or are you often *reading the Bible* to know how *God defines morality*?
 - If *the mirror of God's word* is *reflecting* a *dead* person, there is *hope*... but only if you are willing to *admit* what *you see* is actually *true*.
- The used-to-be dead are:
 - Let's pick up in verse 4...
- **Christ makes us (sinners) gloriously alive!**
 - *"4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God..."* (Ephesians 2:4-8).
 - Praise God for His gracious grace!

May we never be able to read such a passage without our hearts being moved by the incredible mercy on display here!

 - *"even when we were dead... because of His love... out of the overflow of His supremely rich mercy... God made dead sinners alive in Christ Jesus!"*
 - And *"all of this is to show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ!"*

- The used-to-be dead are:
 - Alive (v5) – renewed in the life of Christ... more on this in a bit
 - Glorified with Christ (v6) – seated with Him in the heavenly places... all ready and not yet
 - Destined for Eternal Glory (v7) – God showing His immeasurable riches for ages to come
 - Recipients of God’s Gracious Blessing (v8) – this is all the gift of God... This means God has put any who are alive in Christ in His eternal, unchanging, effective favor!

- *Friends, do you see the marvel of the Gospel of Christ here!?*
- Have you come *face-to-face* with *your* own hopeless *deadness*?
- And have you *looked into the face* of this *glorious Savior*, Jesus Christ, who *lived* and *died* and *rose again* in order that *you* might become *alive forevermore*?
- If this is true, then *doesn’t this change everything*?
- Doesn’t this make *your life* something *radically different* than what it used to be?

- **Christ calls us to die so that we might live.**
 - “23 And he said to all, ***“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”***
 - You must make a choice!
 - You will lose your life and gain Christ...
 - Or you will gain your life and lose Christ.
 - Jesus said, ***“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple... 33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple”*** (Luke 14:26–33).
 - ***“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”*** (Matthew 10:37–39).
 - The Christian life is all about Dying... beginning to end
 - ***The Beginning of the Christian life*** – Death in Baptism
 - ***“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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”*** (Romans 6:2–4).
 - Friends, do you understand that when you heard and believed the Gospel... when you trusted in

Christ as Savior... you were **counting yourself as dead with Him** upon the cross?

- Do you know that **such imagery** is what we are supposed to **see in baptism**? You **dying**...
 - Dying to **self**... dying to the **old way of life**... dying to **your guilt**

- **The Ongoing Christian life** – Me Dying & Christ Living in Me
 - **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** (Galatians 2:20).
 - Friends, if you **follow Jesus** (loving and trusting Him), do you realize that **Christ lives in you**?!
 - Is that the **way** you **approach** your **life**?
 - Do you look for ways that you can **glorify Christ** in your **job**, in your **marriage**, in your **daily activities**?
 - The **ongoing** Christian **life** is me dying and Christ living in me... and this is where **great joy is found**!

- **The Destination of the Christian life** – Death’s Glorious Gain
 - **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better”** (Philippians 1:21–23).
 - Friends, do you know that there is **glorious gain** in **death** for the **Christian**?
 - The Christian may even **desire mortal death**, for this is to be **with Christ** and it is certainly **far better**.

Summary: Make no mistake... Christ calls sinners to die.

(Segue) *But while we remain in this world, Christ calls us to live on mission*

(2) CHRIST CALLS ALL CHRISTIANS TO LIVE ON MISSION

- What is the mission of the local church?
 - Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert: “*Mission... is not everything we do in Jesus’s name, nor everything we do in obedience to Christ. Mission is the task we are given to fulfill. It’s what Jesus sends us into the world to do. And... we think the best place to look is the **Great Commission**.*”¹
 - I believe the Great Commission is exactly the place we should look!
 - “*Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age**’* (Matthew 28:18–20).
 - ***The Mission of the local church is to make disciples.***
 - Individual: You are dead to everything this world has to offer, and alive to Christ (to follow Him). Your mission is to be a disciple who is a disciple-maker (help others follow Jesus).
 - Church: Disciple-making is the collective mission of those disciples who find themselves geographically and willfully connected by their mutual covenant to do this task together.

¹DeYoung, Kevin, and Greg Gilbert *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. Crossway, 2011.

- **The local church is the outpost for missions.**
 - **The local church makes disciples.**
 - Christ commissioned His followers to be disciple-makers (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - Paul told Titus to preach the Gospel and have mature Christians teach others how to follow Jesus (Titus 2:1-10).
 - Paul told Timothy to entrust the Gospel to faithful men who would teach others that same Gospel (2 Tim. 2:2).
 - The pattern and plan of God for the local church is essentially to make disciples!
 - Friends, do you see the importance of ***your discipling efforts*** among ***this local church family***?
 - Do you see that ***what we are doing here*** has been ***handed down to us*** from millions of others who have gone before us?
 - Do you understand that we are taking our place in a ***long line of godly men and women*** who have given themselves away in service to Christ and others?
 - ***What a heritage?! May God help us to steward it well and not squander it!***
 - **The local church sends disciple-makers.**
 - Disciple-making disciples of Jesus are sent as needed.
 - Paul and Barnabas were sent from Antioch to Salamis because those in Salamis ***had not yet heard*** that Christ was the Messiah (Acts 13:3-5).
 - This is disciple-making ***where there are none.***

- Paul sent Titus to Crete in order to **set up proper leadership** among the churches that already existed there (Titus 1:5).
 - This is disciple-making where there **aren't many mature disciples** yet.
 - Paul sent Timothy to Corinth in order to **address the disorderly church** who had gotten far off track (1 Cor. 4:17).
 - This is disciple-making where there are **already unhealthy disciples**.
 - Friends, are we **ready** and **willing** to **send disciple-makers** to those places where **Christ is not known**?
 - Are we **preparing one another** to be the kind of disciple-makers who can **inject new health** and **fidelity** where there is spiritual sickness and chaos?
 - How many among us will be ready to **pastor/shepherd** among this church and others when the need arises?
- **The local church fuels disciple-making efforts.**
 - Churches **support** the work of **disciple-making at home**.
 - Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, “**Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches**” (Gal. 6:6).
 - Paul writing to the Corinthian church said, “**For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’ Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?**” (1 Cor. 9:9-12).

- Paul sent Timothy to the church of Corinth and told them, “*When Timothy comes, see that you **put him at ease** among you, for **he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am**. So let no one despise him. **Help him on his way in peace**, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers” (1 Corinthians 16:10–11).

 - Friends, do you understand your **responsibility** to **financially support** the disciple-making efforts of this local church?
 - Do you understand that one of the **primary** ways you **show gratitude** for the spiritual benefits available here is by giving money?*

- Churches **support** the work of **disciple-making abroad**.
 - Numerous times, **disciple-makers are “sent” by churches** in the book of Acts (13:3, 15:3, 15:22-27, 15:30, 17:10-14).
 - The strong implication is that they were **sent with material** (food, clothing, money, etc.) **support**.
 - Paul wrote to the Philippian church, “***It was kind of you to share my trouble**. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, **no church entered into partnership with me in giving** and receiving, **except you only**. Even in Thessalonica **you sent me help for my needs** once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have **received full payment**, and more. **I am well supplied**, having **received** from Epaphroditus **the gifts you sent**, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:16-18).

 - Friends, do you know that historic Christianity is marked by **constant missionary efforts** from **ordinary local churches**?*

- Do you think of the **local church** and **our partners** in Gospel ministry as merely **one kind of charity** among many?
- Do you count your financial gifts to and through FBC Diana the same as other charitable donations?
- If you **give to the ministry of FBC Diana** and to the **missional efforts** we support, do you know you are participating in the **Great Commission** of our King and Savior?!
- Do you know that there are people who are **hearing the Gospel** and **growing as disciples** as a **direct result** of your financial gifts?
- This is no ordinary charity! **This is the mission of Christ in the world**, and it is ours to join until He returns!

Summary: Christ is on mission in the world, and He calls you to join Him!

(Segue) **Healthy Churches are full of Christians who live on mission.**

(3) HEALTHY CHURCHES HAVE A MISSIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- **Healthy Churches expect to selflessly invest in one another**
 - Disciple-makers **inconvenience** themselves in disciple-making efforts
 - Disciple-makers hear and apply the biblical command of Phil. 2:3-4: ***“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”***
 - They make use of their dinner table, their back yard/porch, their Sunday morning, their texts/cell, their presence, and their words

- **Healthy Churches expect to selflessly invest in their community**
 - Healthy Churches (i.e. members) hear and apply the biblical command of 1 Cor. 10:31: “*Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*”
 - They see their **neighbors** as people God has especially placed near them in order for that neighbor to know what a real Christian is.
 - They see their **co-worker** as a person who desperately needs to know and love Christ, not just as a pain in their side.
 - They see **sports teams** and **classmates** and **social groups** and a thousand other things as opportunities to invest disciple-making efforts for the benefit of whoever will receive them.

- **Healthy Churches expect disciple-making leaders to surface**
 - Healthy Churches know that disciple-making leaders are **meant to arise from within every local church**.
 - Paul told young pastor Timothy, “*what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Timothy 2:2).
 - Healthy Churches (i.e. members) recognize the responsibility to **invest in young disciple-makers**.
 - And they expect to see young disciple-makers rise up to the surface.
 - They don’t see the **local church as a service business**... where the paid staff serves the needs and/or preferences of the consumer.
 - They see the local church as a **community of disciples** who are all **about the task of making disciples**... and they expect that some of the members will be exemplary disciples who are able to faithfully guard and teach others.

- **Healthy Churches expect to lose some disciple-making leaders**
 - One of the natural results of healthy churches having a missional perspective is that ***some of those we love will leave us*** in order to serve Christ elsewhere.
 - Paul exemplifies this selfless missional perspective when he says to the elders/pastors of the Ephesian church: “***I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God***” (Acts 20:24).
 - Healthy Churches don't see ***their own ministry as isolated*** or in ***competition*** with the broader efforts of Gospel-centered churches elsewhere.
 - Healthy Churches enjoy the relationships we have and seek to extend these relationships for the sake of the Gospel... whatever the cost.
 - “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” (Lk. 9:25)

- **Healthy Churches expect to selflessly invest in the broader mission**
 - Healthy Churches understand that they ***share in the joys and pains of the Global Church***.
 - ***IMB Maps***
 - **Combined map** – darker red is lesser exposure to the Gospel and darker Green is higher
 - ***This shows people groups / not nations or states.***
 - **Status 0** – No evangelical Christians or churches. No access to evangelical print, audio, visual or human resources.
 - ***458 people groups*** with a combined population of over ***9.5 million*** as of December 31, 2016.

- These are extremely difficult to reach, religious and governmental restrictions limit access.
- The 10/40 window is located from 10 degrees south to 40 degrees north of the equator.
 - It includes North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.
 - Nearly 4 billion people live here, including 90 percent of the world's poorest of the poor. It is estimated that 1.6 billion of these people have never had the chance to hear the Gospel.
 - The IMB is making efforts to reach these, and the IMB gets some support through CP giving.

- **Status 1** – Less than 2 percent evangelical. Some evangelical resources available. No active church planting within the past two years.
 - **4,497 people groups** with a combined population of nearly **1 billion** as of December 31, 2016.
 - India is a large concentration of these people groups, and that is where **Dan Collins** spends the bulk of his time training indigenous pastors.

- **Status 2** – Less than 2 percent evangelical. Initial or localized church planting within the past two years.
 - **1,715 people groups** with a combined population of nearly **2 billion** as of December 31, 2016.
 - Wales is in this category, and we have partnered with **Rob Burns and Missional Links** to invest personally and financially in local churches in the Vale of Glamorgan.

(4) APPLICATION: DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE

- **Will you give your life away to the disciple-making mission of this church family?**
 - Will you inconvenience yourself for the spiritual growth and benefit of your fellow church members?
 - Will you look for opportunities to invest yourself into the lives of younger and less mature believers around you?
 - Will you open your eyes to the people God has placed all over your daily/weekly routine, so that Christ might be known to them through you?
 - Will you put disciple-making efforts as a top priority in your life – above sports, hobbies, projects, and a bunch of other good things?

- **Will you financially support the mission (both locally and globally)?**
 - Will you choose to see your finances as God-given resources to be used for His glory?
 - Will you resist the overwhelming and relentless pull of the American Dream?
 - Will you take an honest look at your monthly budget to (1) assess how you spend your money and (2) consider how you might prioritize the Great Commission over lesser things?

- **Will you consider the possibility that God might have you give your life away to the disciple-making mission of another local church elsewhere?**
 - Will you think about your current situation in life from a Great Commission (missional) perspective?
 - Will you think about the skills, resources, and opportunities you have as God-given skills, resources, and opportunities... to be used for His glory and the extension of the Gospel?
 - Will you let me know if you are interested in exploring this idea?

Major Point: Healthy Churches are selflessly invested in the Great Commission.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

The 9 Marks of a Healthy Church by Various

<https://www.9marks.org/about/>

What Jesus Continues To Do... by Bryn MacPhail

<http://www.reformedtheology.ca/acts1.htm>

The Church and Missions by Bruce Hunt

http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH02/hunt.html

The Biblical Basis for Missions by R.C. Sproul

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/biblical-basis-missions/>

9 Marks of Healthy Missions by Mack Stiles

<https://www.9marks.org/article/9-marks-of-healthy-missions/>

10 Things...about Missions and the Local Church by Andy Johnson

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-missions-and-the-local-church/>

Cultivating a Culture of Missions in a Small Church by Tom Ascol

<https://www.9marks.org/article/cultivating-culture-missions-small-church/>

Christian Missions in the Third Millennium by Albert Mohler

<https://albertmohler.com/2014/02/10/christian-missions-in-the-third-millennium-3/>

The Life Of Jesus, After The Ascension by George Fuller

http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/WTJ-NT/Fuller-JesusAfterLkActs-WTJ.pdf

Guidelines for Deciding Whom a Church Supports by Andy Johnson

<https://www.9marks.org/article/guidelines-deciding-whom-church-supports/>

Biblical Texts on Missions by Unknown Compiler

<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/missionstexts.html>