

To the Ends of the Earth
Luke 24:46-48, Acts 1-29, Romans 10:9-15
November 12, 2017



At the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, in Matthew 28:19, He left His disciples with this mandate, "Therefore **go and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Earlier this fall, our church focused on this disciple-making mandate. We broke down the disciple-making process into 4 chairs or 4 stages: win the lost, build the believers, equip the workers, and multiply disciple-makers. In our daily lives, here in the Bemidji area, we are called to live out our faith and to share it with others. We are doing that and we'll continue to do that because it's our great joy and it brings God glory when we live out an abundant faith. Today, let's focus on a different aspect of Disciple-making. We kind of read right past it above. Matthew 28:19 says "Therefore go and make disciples **of ALL nations...**"

Disciple-making includes both a local and a global mission.

The disciple-making mission from Matthew 28 is broken down for us geographically in Acts 1:8. Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, AND to the ends of the earth." This global mission to the ends of the earth is laid out beautifully in the New Testament book of Acts. As a way of celebrating and remembering this awesome mission, take some time to read aloud from the following responsive reading. It tracks the early spread of the gospel. It begins in Jerusalem and spreads to the ends of the earth. It opens with some words from the Gospel of Luke, then proceeds chronologically by highlighting a loose collection of verses from the first 13 chapters of Acts. As you read, note the underlining as you read. It points out not only the numerical growth of the early church but also its geographical spread.

Scripture Reading Luke 24:46-48, and specific verses from Acts 1-13.

"[Jesus] told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:46-48)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins... Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:38, 41)

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. (Acts 4:3-4)

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness... After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:29, 31)

... They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 5:40-42)

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep...

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (Acts 7:59-8:1)

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there...So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:4-5, 8)

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. (Acts 9:31)

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. (Acts 10:34-35)

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:2-3)

Acts 13:3 only gets us to midway through the book but it's an amazing launching point for an even further spread of the gospel. That little phrase "sent them off" has huge ramifications. It begins an ever-increasing global spread of the gospel. Chapters 13-28 go on to tell the story of Paul's missionary journeys, spreading geographically roughly from east to west, ending with his ministry in Rome.

I wanted us to read this together this morning to remind us that our mission's mandate as a church is a continuation of what God has already been doing through His churches for 2,000 years. Part of our mandate as a local church is to continue this legacy of sending out workers around the world. Romans 10:13-15 reminds us, "for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

This commitment to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth is why our church is committed to a strong mission's program.

Our Global Partners have local and international impact.

We are so blessed as a church to support some 30 Global Partners. Let me tell you just a little bit about each one of them. Here's my disclaimer though, with 30 different Global Partners, it's hard to keep up to date on all the most current details of each ministry, but I'm going to give this a try.

14 of the 30 global partners we support have a more local or US focus:

1. Jim Frick works at the Beltrami County Jail ministering to those incarcerated there. He prays and studies the Bible with them.
2. Steve Hanson has been serving at Timber Bay in the Bemidji area for a long time now. He and his team mentor area youth to know Christ and find the hope and stability He offers.
3. Adam Dandar works with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship at BSU.
4. Doug Tapper and a team called, "Without Reservation" feature a program called "The Story Teller." They broadcast the Christian testimonies of Native believers to Native peoples all across North America.
5. Scott Buchan is the main Director at Camp Oak Hills. The minister to hundreds of campers, particularly in the summer months.



6. Brian Eastling is the Assistant Director at Camp Oak Hills. He helps with programming and leadership teams to impact campers with the Good News about Jesus.
7. Dan Hovestol serves with Mokahum Ministry Center in Cass Lake. He focuses on fundraising and recruiting Native students to come to the ministry center and get trained in the Bible.
8. Jason Kane is the Director of Business Operations at Camp Forest Springs in Wisconsin. They serve many campers and also train up future camp directors through their internship program.
9. Paul Straubel is the Director of the Center for Indian Ministries.
10. Leo Bird is a Native believer who serves at the Mokahum Ministry Center. He trains Native believers, teaches them leadership, and leads them in various ministry trips.
11. Dale Fredrickson works with Outpost Ministries in the Twin Cities. Their focus is ministering to those who struggle with same sex attraction.
12. Ben Fultz is heading to Colorado in January to work with Navigator's. He'll be on fulltime staff at Eagle Lake Camps.
13. Ryan O'Leary works with Converge and serves with a ministry called CHIEF. We aren't supporting him and his family yet, but they are part of our future focus and we'll add them as soon as our Global Partners giving levels increase. Ryan is part Native himself and he has a heart to empower hundreds of Native Christian leaders who can then reach thousands of other Natives.
14. Sarah Page spent 28 years serving in France. She is now retired from a ministry called TEAM and lives in Oklahoma. She continues to minister to her neighbors there.

One of the reasons that we try to use the term "Global Partner" is that in many countries, it's illegal to talk about Jesus. So we try to be careful. In fact, I won't list any of the personal names of those serving overseas right now. This is a good REMINDER: Use caution with any correspondence and communication with our Global Partners. If you're not sure, please ask. When in doubt, it's better to be safe than sorry.

5 of the 30 global partners we support focus on mobilizing others in missions:

1. One couple serves with the Evangelical Free Church of America mobilizing others to serve in missions. They also lead various justice initiatives including sponsoring children through Global Fingerprints and rescuing women and children being trafficked. This happens in some fairly dangerous places right on the edge of very spiritually dark corners of our world.
2. Another couple helps mobilize adults and adult teams to go out and bring the gospel to Muslims.
3. Another couple leads marriage and family seminars in many places, including having the material translated into other languages.
4. Another global partner is a leader in Iowa who specializes in sending adults on short term mission trips around the world.
5. Another couple serves at Bethany International in the Twin Cities. They equip and mentor the next generation of leaders who will focus on Unreached People Groups around the world.

11 of our 30 global partners have an International Focus:

1. One family has been sharing the Good News in China for a long time.
2. One young adult is in Turkey helping refugees find food and clothing and sharing faith along the way.
3. Another young adult is living in Mexico City teaching and sharing faith along the way.
4. One couple specializes in internet technology and travels all around the world improving their technology networks for better effectiveness.
- 5/6. We have two people who are translating the Bible into languages that do not yet have God's Word in their home tongue.
7. One couple serves in France.
8. One family is currently transitioning to the Solomon Islands, which is northeast of Australia.
9. One couple has served in South Asia for decades.
10. One family is part of our church's adopted people group. They are now serving as indigenous workers reaching their own people with the faith.
11. Another family recently moved to a different city in South Asia due to a heightened danger against foreigners there.

With such limited space, I've barely told you anything about these 30 global partners from our church. But, I hope this whets your appetite a little. Stop by the global partner hallway and read their latest newsletters or get in touch with our Global Connections Team. If you're interested, we are looking for 2 or 3 more people to join this team. Contact our church to learn more. Beyond joining the Global Connections Team,

How can we pray, give, and go to the Ends of the Earth?

1) **Join a Barnabas Team.** We've been talking about these for a few weeks now as a church. There has been information in the Fellowship Hall listing many ways you can pray for, encourage, and support our GP's. See the footnote below for some of this info.¹ Barnabas Teams got their name in honor of a man named Barnabas in the New Testament. Barnabas was a missionary himself, but he also had a strong ministry of encouraging other missionaries including the Apostle Paul and John Mark.²

2) **Give financially to our Global Partner's Fund.**

Help send others. The second line down on our church giving envelopes says "Global Partners (Missions Fund)." For 2018, our church recently committed to give \$80,000 to support these men/women/families in their ministries locally and globally. Please consider supporting our global partners as part of your church giving.

3) **Go on a short-term mission trip.**

Early I mentioned several mission's mobilizers that we support. Get in touch with one of them and take initiative to go on a short-term mission trip. Our Global Connections Team is praying about a trip to visit our adopted people group in South Asia in November of 2018. There will be an informational meeting on Sunday, December 3. Come and learn more.

4) **Get trained and go long-term.**

Bethany International in the Twin Cities focuses on training people to reach the unreached. Put another way, they are "taking the church where it's not." There are many other training schools and colleges as well. If God has put this burden on your heart, prayerfully consider this calling on your life. Don't ignore this prompting from Him.

You may have noticed on the title to this sermon that I listed Acts 1-29 for today's text. But... there is no acts 29. Acts ends at chapter 28. In fact, the very last verse is Acts 28:31 which says "[Paul] proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!" So, why did I list Acts 29? Because Acts 29 is us; that's you and me. We are here to proclaim God's Kingdom in our own Jerusalem, we call it Bemidji. And when the temperature has already reached below zero, it can feel like the ends of the earth. But, even here in Bemidji, as Christ-followers, we are called to be Christ's witnesses to the ends of the earth. The witness of Acts 29 is left to us!

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
on November 12, 2017 by Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

¹ What is a Barnabas Team? A Barnabas team is a small group of committed people who come together to care for their Global Partner (GP) in a variety of ways. This team exists to help meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the GP, and to act as representative between the partner and the church: cultivating the connection of the partner with the church, and the church with the partner. Why a Barnabas Team? 3 John 6b-8 says "Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth."

By the very nature of their work, they are serving the Lord on our behalf. It is of great benefit to our church body to understand and cheer them on in the work they are doing, and of great benefit to our Global Partners as well. It is easy to assume that "someone else" is encouraging them in their work, checking in on how they are doing, and being able to pass along prayer requests to the church body. It's also good to let them hear what's going on in our congregation. There are varying needs of each GP. Here are some ideas you might consider:

1. Meet with the other members of your Barnabas Team as often as desired (perhaps every month or two) in order to share news from the GPs, pray together for them, prepare letters to them, etc. Correspond regularly in order to be aware of their spiritual, emotional, physical, financial well-being. Follow up with whatever applicable kind of help is possible.
2. Send occasional "thinking of you/praying for you" encouraging note/care package/birthday card, etc.
3. Help facilitate hospitality when GPs (especially non-local) visit. This might include picking them up from the airport, transporting, grocery shop-ping, taking them out to eat, putting them up in a spare room, etc.
4. Act as general go-betweens for our church and our GPs; keeping them up to speed on what God is doing among us and how they can pray for us, and passing along special news/prayer requests to the pastors/elders/GCT/congregation as is fitting.
5. Consider visiting them where they serve.
6. Ask to be on their newsletter list so you can get to know them and their ministry.
7. Think up creative ways to raise funds specifically for your Global Partner.

² See Acts 9:26-28 and also Acts 15:36-40 with 2 Timothy 4:11.