

"Fishers of Men" Series

"That Your Fruit Should Remain"

John 15:15-17

Jesus' words to His disciples in John 15 came just hours before He would go to the cross. He was not preparing them to simply *believe* something; He was preparing them to *become* something. He tells them, in essence:

"I chose you, I appointed you, I'm sending you, and I'm expecting lasting fruit."

This isn't just about leading someone to Christ; it's also about training them in what it means to walk with Christ, in what it means to bear fruit – both the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of souls brought to Christ.

When we share the Gospel, we're not just handing out invitations to heaven, or "a fire escape from hell" – we're introducing people to the Savior who walks with them for life. The goal of the Great Commission is fruit that doesn't wither – *fruit that remains*.

This final message in our *Fishers of Men* series brings us to that ultimate purpose:

We are called, not just to "fish for men," but to faithfully disciple those we reach until their lives, and their fruit, also remain.

That's exactly what Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19-20: "*Make disciples... teach them to observe all things... I am with you always.*"

It's what He promised in Acts 1:8: "*Ye shall receive power... and ye shall be witnesses unto me...*"

And it's what we must obey today, both as a church, and as individual believers.

I. OUR COMMISSION – MATT. 28:18-20; MARK 16:15; LUKE 24:47-48; JOHN 20:21

Our commission is not just an individual responsibility; it's also a church (corporate) responsibility in that we must work together in the ministry of making disciples.

A. We are sent together – “Go ye therefore” (this is plural)

It's not just the pastor's job, nor the missionary's job, nor the evangelist's job, nor the job of a few zealous soul-winners. It is every believer's job.

If the Great Commission is truly a corporate calling, then every member of the church has a role to play in fulfilling it, even if their specific contribution looks different from others.

1. "*All nations*" requires collective effort beyond individual capability.
2. "*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" extends beyond the original eleven disciples.
3. The book of Acts shows the entire church participating in mission, not just apostles.

Acts 8:4

⁴ Therefore they [the church, vs. 1] that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

B. We have the same mission – “teach all nations”

1. The word for “teach” here is a different Greek word (μαθητεύω) than that for “teaching” (διδάσκω) in verse 20. This verb appears in the active voice in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 14:21, and it carries the idea of “to make a disciple” or

"to disciple someone." The word comes from μαθητή, meaning "disciple" or "learner," but it encompasses far more than intellectual instruction.

Acts 14:21

²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

2. So, why is it translated "teach" in the KJV?

In 1611, the English word "teach" had a broader range of meaning than it commonly does today. It carried the understanding of:

- a) Instruction, as it still does now
- b) Training or formation, especially in moral or spiritual character
- c) Even conversion or bringing into a way of life

So, in Early Modern English, "*teach all nations*" was likely understood to mean something very close to "make disciples of all nations." The narrower modern use of "teach" (i.e., classroom instruction) didn't dominate until later.

➤ For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* traces usages of "teach" meaning *to cause someone to follow or adopt a principle or belief system*, which fits well with μαθητεύω.

3. English has no clean, active-verb equivalent for μαθητεύω ("to disciple," "to make a disciple"). The noun "disciple" existed in English, but the verb form (like "discipling") didn't enter regular usage until long after the KJV was produced.

"Teach" was the best available word to convey the idea of training, forming, and educating a follower.

4. The phrase immediately following (*"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"*) clarifies the method *and* aim of this *"teaching."* Together, verses 19 and 20 show a twofold process:
 - a) v. 19: make disciples (expressed as *"teach all nations"*)
 - b) v. 20: train those disciples in obedience

So, while *"teach"* in v. 19 refers to making disciples, the second *"teaching"* in v. 20 (from *διδάσκω*) refers to instructing those new disciples.

The translators trusted that the flow of the grammar and structure would guide the reader into understanding that the first *"teach"* is more about conversion and identification (baptism), and the second about ongoing instruction.

C. We "bear witness" together – Luke 24:48

"Ye are witness" – as before, this is plural, speaking of corporate testimony.

Luke 24:48

⁴⁸ And ye are witnesses of these things.

II. OUR CALLING

Our calling involves two actions: Evangelize and Disciple.

A. Evangelize the lost – Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8

1. Preach the gospel – 1 Cor. 15:1-4 (we looked at this in our last message)
2. Every believer is a messenger

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

¹⁸ And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

B. Disciple the saved – Matt. 28:19-20

1. Baptism – Before we teach a new believer all things Christ has commanded, we must teach them to follow Him in the first command: baptism.

a) Baptism is obedience

- (1) Jesus was baptized *"to fulfill all righteousness"* – not because He needed cleansing, but because He was modeling obedience (Matt. 3:15).

Matthew 3:15

¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, *Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* Then he suffered him.

- (2) To skip baptism is to begin the Christian life with disobedience.
- (3) In the Great Commission, baptism is listed before teaching because it identifies

someone as a follower of Christ.

b) Baptism symbolizes the gospel we proclaim

- (1) *"Buried with Him...raised with Him"* (Rom. 6:3-4)

Romans 6:3-4

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

- (2) It's a visual declaration of:

(a) Death to sin

(b) Burial of the old life

(c) Resurrection to new life in Christ

- (3) As such, baptism is not just a ceremony; it is *the* disciple's public testimony that the Gospel has changed them.

c) Baptism declares identification and submission

- (1) The word *"into"* (εἰς) in Romans 6:3 carries the meaning of being placed into union with. It marks identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

- (2) This is how we *"put on Christ"* publicly (cf. Gal. 3:27).

Galatians 3:27

²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(3) It's the first act of surrendered discipleship.

(4) Baptism is for believers

(a) Every instance in the book of Acts follows this order: believe then baptism.

(b) Delay weakens the testimony and the pattern of obedience.

(5) Baptism is serious, even costly

In many countries, baptism can cost a believer everything. That's how serious Jesus and the early church treated it. If our churches treat it lightly or delay it unnecessarily, we communicate to new believers that discipleship is optional.

Consider the act of baptism. For us believers today we approach it in a rather nonchalant manner. It is not such a big deal. It certainly is not something we must seriously wrestle over as to whether we will do it or not as in the early church. That is because back then baptism was a very public and a very subversive action.

Indeed, in the early church – as well as in many parts of the world today – to get baptised was an extremely risky and costly action to take. As James Montgomery Boice explains, “In the ancient world, to be identified with Christ in baptism was a bold and risky declaration. It often put the believer's life in jeopardy. There was nothing wrong with listening to Christian preaching or propaganda. But when a Christian was baptized, he was saying to the state as well as to his fellow believers that he was now a follower of Jesus Christ and that he was going to be loyal to him regardless of the outcome. It meant ‘Christ before Caesar’.”

2. Teach – ongoing commitment to train in obedience to Christ and His Word.

- a) You've most likely heard something like this before, but it is very true: "The Great Commission isn't just about growing crowds; it's also about growing people."
- b) John 15:16 tells us the kind of fruit Jesus wants from His followers: the kind that remains, that multiplies, and that matures.

2 Timothy 2:2

² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

- c) Think of discipleship in relation to our study on The Parable of the Sower. It's really the difference between temporary fruit and lasting fruit. "A convert not followed up is like a seed that sprouts but never takes root."

Matthew 13:20-21

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

- d) "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" is how we ensure fruit remain.

Colossians 1:28-29

²⁸ Whom we preach, warning every man, and

teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: ²⁹ Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

III. OUR CONFIDENCE

Our confidence is in Christ's presence and power.

A. His authority

"All power is given unto me..."

B. His presence

"Lo, I am with you alway..."

C. His power

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you"

IV. OUR COMMITMENT

Our commitment must be personal and intentional.

A. Discipling is not optional

It's the evidence of obedience.

B. Discipling requires connection

We need to walk with them, teach them, help them to grow in their service to the Lord.

C. Discipling multiplies ministry

The goal is for them to reach others.

1 Thessalonians 2:8

⁸ So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

Proverbs 27:17

¹⁷ Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

1 Corinthians 11:1

¹ Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

Conclusion: In the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, Tanzanian runner John Stephen Akhwari entered the marathon. Midway through, he fell badly, injured his leg, and was urged to quit.

But long after the crowds had left and the sun had set, he limped across the finish line – bleeding, battered, but determined.

A reporter asked him, “Why didn’t you quit?”

He said:

“My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me to finish.”

Jesus didn’t just call you to start this race; He called you to finish.

Not to merely share the Gospel, but to make disciples. Not just to preach, but to produce fruit that remains.