



**VILLAGE  
CHURCH**

Presbyterian (USA)

# Go to the World!

SCRIPTURE:  
Matthew 28:  
16-20

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Feb. 4, 2024 — Sermon by Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka

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**T**his is it. According to the gospel of Matthew, these are the last words that Jesus Christ speaks to his disciples. They go to a mountain. The mountain is not named but that's not the important part. The mountain is the important part. Remember in the Bible, God loves mountains and whenever a mountain appears, pay attention because God is going to do something incredible. It makes sense, then, that Jesus would last speak to the disciples on a mountain. They worshiped him and then—the line I love in the gospel—Matthew writes, “but some doubted.” That actually makes sense, too, because in Matthew's telling of the story, there is no appearance to them like there is Luke and John. This is the first time the disciples see him so while they worship him, they also doubt. Doubted if it was really him risen from the dead. Doubted if he was the Messiah. Doubted if he was the son of God. Probably all of those things in some way.

But here's the amazing thing: It doesn't seem to matter. Jesus speaks to all of them, even the doubters, and says, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” A couple of things Bible scholars notice: The verbs “go” and “make” are both imperatives. These are not suggestions. It's not “if you feel like it.” Or “when you have time.” It is “Go!” And it is “Make!”

And I find this interesting. In Greek there are two kinds of imperative verbs: punctiliar and durative (or linear). Punctiliar is instantaneous. As in: Do it now. Durative (or linear) is continuous. As you go about your life...

So the next time your parents tell you to clean your room, that is likely an imperative. It's not a suggestion. You need to clean up your room. But you can ask them, “So, is that a punctiliar imperative or a durative (or linear) imperative?” Just for clarity.

The “go therefore” is punctiliar. Jesus is sending

them out now. “Go!” But the “make disciples” is linear. This making of disciples is not instantaneous.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” That “all nations” is powerful because it is all encompassing. Everyone is included. Even gentiles are included in “all nations.” It is the broadest and most expansive term possible.

“Baptizing them,” all of them, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” That's why when we baptize, we give the Trinitarian blessing. Because Jesus told us to.

“And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The last words of Jesus. Not “huddle and up and take care of yourselves.” Not “stay here and worship on this mountain.” Jesus says: “Go. Make disciples. Baptize. Teach. And remember.” We call this the Great Commission. It's not just the great mission but the great co-mission because Jesus is sending the disciples out together.

For 75 years we have been trying to do just that. Dr. Bob Meneilly, our founding pastor, was known for describing us as “the mission church on Mission Road.” There are four moments (among many) I want to highlight.

First, in March 1950, in just the second year of our existence, Village Church wanted to give back to the national church some of the funds it had received to start the congregation. The national church had given a grant of \$113,000 to buy this property and build the house for Dr. Bob and Shirley Meneilly. The congregation voted to mortgage the property and take out a loan in order to send \$25,000 back to the national church so it could start another congregation somewhere else in the country. We have come to call this the “first decision mission.” The annual budget that year was \$26,700. And we voted to mortgage the property, to go in debt, so that another congregation could be founded.

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In a letter sent to the Session by Rev. Dr. Archibald Stewart, general secretary of the Board of American Missions on Aug. 3, 1950, he writes: “The founding of Village Church was a venture in faith, but the way that work has progressed, I wonder if the Board and myself had faith enough, seeing how crowded you are even after just one year. Certainly the Lord has been with us and your new congregation and certainly gave us wisdom in the choice of a minister for you.” In the second year of our existence, we did a remarkable thing. We turned our attention beyond ourselves. Jesus said, “Go, make, baptize, teach, remember.”

Second story: In the late 60s, the United States was facing many challenges and opportunities. The civil rights movement was growing. Protests against the Vietnam War. Women’s liberation movement. In the midst of this, Village Church—predominantly white, wealthy, gospel-focused, justice-minded. Dr. Bob and other leaders approached leaders in the African American community in Kansas City and began a relationship. They asked what Village could do to help the community. Black leaders said that they needed a way to help members of their community find meaningful employment. They proposed the opening of the Black Motivational Training Center in Kansas City, the first of its kind. In 1971, the congregation voted, not unanimously, but overwhelmingly in favor of giving a \$100,000 grant to fund that center. In today’s dollars, that would be about \$840,000. Various members of the congregation provided everything from office machines to a new HVAC system to office supplies and furniture. Jesus said, “Go, make, baptize, teach, remember.”

Third story: In July 1992, Dr. Paul Riekhof along with Rev. Andy Wilson, our youth minister, led a group of 40 Village Church youth and adults to the Dominican Republic to a community called La Romana to build a health clinic. They were there for 12 days and it was our first significant international mission experience.

High schooler Julie Johnson wrote, “The thing about the trip that changed me the most was experiencing the people’s faith in God. I went down sort of ambivalent about God. I went to the Dominican and I saw God with these people, the strength they had

and the faith they had; it was incredible.”

Then three months later, in September 1992, Dr. Tony Diehl led a small group of health care professionals on a medical mission to Haiti. They spent time in a small community about four hours outside of Port-au-Prince hosted by an Episcopal parish. Tony wrote, “For me, as a physician, this was a most meaningful experience and it makes me fully realize how fortunate we are to live in the United States with our health care. The children and parents we treated were so appreciative of our caring for them. I returned with a real sense of our calling to global mission. I plan to return to Haiti regularly in the future.”

In January 1995, Dr. Diehl and a group of doctors and nurses went back to La Romana in the Dominican Republic. That began the Dominican Republic Medical Partnership which continues to this day and has benefitted thousands of persons over the years. In that first group were Dr. Scott Beall, Ginny Beall and Dr. Ted Higgins.

Kim and Ted Higgins fell in love with the people and country of Haiti in 1981 when they spent four months there when Ted was a surgical resident at Yale Medical School. He founded the Higgins Brothers Surgicenter of Hope—named after his father and uncle who were both surgeons, too. From the devastating earthquake in 2010 through the current crises, the center has remained open and is now one of the few working hospitals and surgery centers in Haiti.

In 2010, Village Church was invited to partner with Rev. David Nzioka to help the ministry of Christ in Thwake, Kenya (David’s birthplace). A group has consistently gone to Thwake with Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church and other churches in the Heartland Presbytery during the past 14 years and another trip is planned for this May. Jesus said, “Go, make, baptize, teach, remember.”

Fourth illustration: Last year, we celebrated our 25th year serving the greater Kansas City area through our Food Pantry and Clothes Closet at our 99th Street campus. As we continued to see the need for food and clothing grow here in Johnson County, we responded to the call of the Holy Spirit. Let’s watch this video.

And as proof that we can be agile, coming out of the pandemic, we at Village Church on Antioch

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provided a pop-up food pantry for 18 months with volunteers and the leadership of Rev. Brandon Frick and Laura Patton. Ministry is among us. Mission is when we look beyond ourselves.

A first decision to give funds to help grow another new church. A center to support the African-American community in Kansas City. Partnerships with persons in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Kenya and at the border between Agua de Prieta, Mexico and

Douglas, Arizona. A Food Pantry and Clothes Closet. A Pop-up Food Pantry.

It's in our DNA. It's who we are. Not for our glory. But for the glory of God and the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind. Jesus said, "Go, make, baptize, teach, remember." Seventy-five years. Thanks be to God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.