

Series:	Reference:	Title:	Date:
Ruin to Renovation	Matthew 28:18-20	Revolution	01.21.18
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
Jesus set about a world revolution imparting his thoughts & heart to his disciples he commanded them to go and make other disciples of all nations - what does that mean for us today as his disciples?			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

#### -SLIDE PERSON: PLEASE RECORD THE SERMON-

We've laid claim that every person on the earth is being spiritually formed. Always. Some think about this. Some don't. People like Moses, Solomon, Socrates, Spinoza, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Oprah, Tim Keller & all the other pastors, priests, shamans & gurus think about this. Environmentalists, Feminists, hardline Republicans & Democrats think about this. White Supremacists & Black Lives Matter Adherents think about this - everyone's trying to change the other. They may not use the term spiritual formation, but it's in essence that to which they drive. They all know, how you think reveals who you are, which drives what you do.

*Proverbs 4:23, Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts (GNT). Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. (NLT)*

The only argument between all these prattling folk & armchair philosophers is *what* in our spirit needs changing & *how* that change is wrought within us. Spiritual formation happens & God calls us to be participatory with him in our character development.

If this series has a signature passage it may be John 7:37-38, "...Let anyone who is thirsty come to me & drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

The call to rise above all other humanistic philosophies recycled throughout history & literally take on the heart of God. Remember, we said last week, Christians are the salt of the earth given we're the bearer of the thoughts of God & to bear the thoughts of God is to bear the heart of God.

Jesus came & lived among us for a time. Taught. Performed acts of power. Healed. Challenged. Led. Went to the Cross. Conquered the grave. After his resurrection & before his ascension he gathered his disciples together commanding them to go to all nations & do as he'd been doing.

The moment was his Great Commission. His last command, our first concern...*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Mt 28:18-20)*

If we want to know God's objective for the earth, it's here. To bring every ethnic group under his directive goodness & power. Under his reign. And He's using us in that process, until as the prophet Isaiah says, *the whole earth is full of His glory* (6:3) and the prophet Habakkuk says, *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (2:14).

It's why Christianity is one of the few missionary religions & we call ourselves evangelical (*in the best sense of the word*). If that word Evangelical makes you itchy, remember what I mean is dissimilar with its marred image of today. Timothy Keller recently wrote an article which said when he began his church in NYC in the 70's *evangelical* meant they weren't angry fundamentalists. Now it means they are. One recent article said, "*Evangelicalism, so it seems to many, wants political power at all costs, and is using the language of morality and "family values" as a facade.*"<sup>1</sup> Neither of those things is what I mean when I say evangelical.

The Great Commission is evangelical, and has been the catchword marking all strong revival & enlivened movements of the Spirit of God in the church. Movements marked by a strong commitment & submission to the Word of God, and taking seriously this last command as our first concern. It simply means we're devoted to the Scriptures, following Jesus, being led by his Spirit, loving others into relationship with him, and caring for those in need - Great Commission Christians committed to seeing all ethnicities know & worship Jesus.

Make no mistake, Jesus set in motion a perpetual evangelistic revolution enacted through his followers (which includes us). A revolution which will continue until God reigns in full on earth. A revolution changing the hearts of people one by one as His Living Water wells up within each of us & overflows to others around us. **Spiritual Formation & Discipleship overflow into Evangelism & the world's changed by Jesus through the ministry of His Body on earth - the Church.**

**It happens in no other way. Not implemented programmatically. Institutionally. Or by force. It's by one-on-one intimate interaction with others. Talking. Sharing. Letting Christ in you overflow to others through word & deed.**

**Our future hope is the culmination of God's reign on earth where evil is defeated & humankind is fully & joyously conformed to the peace & justice of God's heart. A result of changed hearts, not proceeding from better social institutions, or laws imposed from the outside upon people. It isn't about communal, social, governmental, or institutional power *over* people, but rather it begins with God's power within us - the bearers of the thoughts of God, the salt of the earth.**

One of the best bumper stickers out there says something to the effect of, "*Be the change you want to see in the world.*" Although as Christians we interpret that differently than another might. For someone else it may mean to pick up the flag of some new popular issue waving it loudly & at times with anger, or un-forgiveness, towards an opposing side. Or, it may mean to treat someone better *until* they treat you badly, and by doing so, give you free reason to withhold further care or service.

**But for us, to be the change means to be Jesus - changed from within, our own evil nature & selfish desires excised from our being as we begin to walk in the holiness, purity & love of God. Our character reflecting Jesus in loving sacrifice, teaching & leading people to the Truth. We can't be the problem, we become the solution.**

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<sup>1</sup> [The Generation that Must Save Evangelicalism from Its Moral Compromises](#), Brandon Colbert

The Gospel changes hearts which is to change thoughts, which is to change beliefs, values, behavior, and even what we produce (artifacts). Quietly overtaking the world from the inside out, not outside in (WorldView Model). The difference which sets Christianity apart from all other religions.

A change of character resulting from ongoing relationship with Jesus in the context of the body of Christ. This relationship with Jesus, when engaged, changes feelings, ideas, how we react to others & situations...it affects tendencies & habits, all our social interactions & relations. A revolution of character changing the world through us.

Orderly & healthy social arrangements, laws, structures & institutions may be helpful in this journey, but they aren't the end goal, certainly aren't necessary for this heart change, and definitely aren't the *means* of this change in humanity either. A Christian can be a Christian in the midst of utter chaos & war. The end goal is Jesus & his reign in the hearts of us & others. The fundamental means to true heart change is his transformative presence for anyone. Jesus is the only true hope of the world.

It's a fundamental mistake to place even lofty principles of justice above Jesus, making it our pet cause in life. Or, to boil religion down to simplistic morality, instead of personal relationship with Christ reflected in holiness & purity. Or, to hold fast to tradition for tradition sake when tradition was intended only to drive us to Jesus. Forms drain of power & need change to communicate again, we shouldn't hold too strongly to them.

But we often tend to focus on outward things. It *seems* easier, and a lot less frightening. The outward things are more easily controlled & keep our eyes diverted from the hard work of true heart change. Since true heart change forces us to face our most tormenting demons, but if we're brave & trusting, Jesus will overcome them.

We often make these mistakes in our Christian lives. For instance, I just read an article in the Philadelphia Inquirer about new Catholic spiritual group, *The Neocatechumenal Way*. A group born out of a passionate interaction with Jesus in community trying to bring the Catholic Church back to basics of study & evangelism. I'm a *Protestant*, I don't mean to offend, as a Protestant I don't see eye-to-eye with the Catholic Church on all points, but to get back to scriptural study & evangelism, that's a good thing.

But Catholic parishioners get upset because it's different. It doesn't follow their comforting traditional path. When a priest invites this Way into their church to revitalize, people sometimes leave, given it challenges the system, without ever asking themselves if it's something God's trying to address in their hearts.

We tend to guard our structures, and involve ourselves too much in the heated exchange of politics & institutional matters, instead of Jesus in our hearts & the Great Commission to which he's called us. Remember, when hearts change, people change from belief, to value, to behaviors, and even to artifacts (what we produce).

Focusing on the artifact, or behavior, doesn't change hearts, but hearts do change behavior & artifacts. Laws & rules only restrain behavior, they hold no power to change hearts. Changed hearts in Christ naturally produce better institutions which uphold justice & mercy in their day-to-day operations.

It could be, we don't want to do the long hard work of seeing Jesus answer this in us & others. We don't have long-suffering hearts & attitudes in these matters. It seems inefficient to us in a fast-food society. We don't like the idea that some folks will just not accept Jesus no matter how well we represent him, as if it were up to us. It isn't. We're only called to be faithful in the expression of Jesus to all peoples until he returns. But sometimes, we're simply derailed in our noble pursuit of Christ too easily by way of spiritual warfare.

We don't want to practice what he preached, emulating how he lived, and to what he called us to in the Great Commission, since it's long & uncomfortably intimate. We can't control it. We think demonstrations & law change will change the world quicker, but it can't. Coercion doesn't change hearts. Laws, punitive measures, chains, bars, or shaming, don't change hearts...Jesus does.

When we put people into prison for misdemeanor criminality, they come out professional criminals, not loving kind productive citizens. But when Jesus changes a heart, the deadness in us is buried, and something is brought to life, the old has gone, the new has come.

The problem is spiritual entropy. Like we said, the heart is deceitful above all else. Left to our own earthly wisdom we tend to be taken away in the current of humanistic thought-life, especially when it's festooned in religious garb. We allow life to happen, unintentional in our pursuit of Jesus. Suddenly we're not praying. Not reading & meditating on Scripture. Not communing with the Holy Spirit. And the world's wisdom begins to seep back into the cracks & crevices of the church. It becomes a business. A social club. An angry social justice mob. Purpose shifts from the glorification of Christ in the world, to just getting our agenda across, or guarding assets.

When spiritual entropy takes over the church, bad things happen. We tend to focus on the externals instead of Jesus. Think of the Crusades. Hidden sexual misconduct & coverups. Angry hurtful leadership. Or, churches which abandon Scriptural authority, loosely wearing religious garb, adopting current pop-culture views on damaging issues. You can dress up a pig, put a ring in its snout, but it's still a pig.

We don't hear of churches who've practiced healthy lives with Jesus. They fly under the radar serving one another & neighbors well. Loving the broken-hearted & poor. Sharing Jesus in word & deed. Walking in purity & holiness. Doing it all without calling attention to themselves.

Bad news travels fast. Good news doesn't. In business, a satisfied customer will tell 10 people, a disgruntled customer will tell a thousand. But the church is the salt of the world, even with its faults, most of the good in the world is a result of it. Trace back origins of any good communal institution, be it the YMCA, Hospitals, works among the poor, and almost, if not always, they have Christian origin. I was in the work of the Tsunami of 2004, it was Christians who answered the call to recover & rebuild during that time. Not Muslims. Not Buddhists. Not Hindus. Not Millennial Atheists. Christians.

Atheist millennial volunteerism will wane (it's started to already). People will eventually give up volunteerism since they'll realize it doesn't change much in actuality, and there's no greater thing giving ultimate purpose to the work. They won't be able to conjure the

self-sacrificial longterm spirit necessary to do good for others who don't care you're doing good for them. They have no god who hung on a cross as a model for them saying, *"Forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

Suffice it to say, from the truly renovated heart, living water will well up & flow from within us until *the whole earth is full of His glory* (Isaiah 6:3) and *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Habakkuk 2:14).

But that happens in the atmosphere of intentionality, being spiritually formed in Christ under the lead of the Holy Spirit & Word of God. The Living Water of Christ can't flow through pipes of corrupted souls. If your public water pipes get clogged with muck, the flow's cut off. The pipe still remains, the connection's there, but the pipe needs cleaning out. By God's grace you are connected to Him. That's his doing, something he won't sever. But we participate in the relationship as we're being transformed into his likeness; in Christian theological terms, 'being sanctified'. Remember, the Gospel isn't against *effort*, just *earning*. We can't earn our salvation, but we're called to work it out hand-in-hand with Him.

If you remember we talked about the Dung Gate in our Nehemiah series - the gate in the city walls of Jerusalem where they expelled the garbage. There was also the Water Gate where people gathered to hear the Word of God read out over them. An image of the Living Water of God's word constantly flowing into the people of Jerusalem expelling the bad & replacing it with good.

Utilizing the means of spiritual formation in our lives is to allow God to clean out the pipes. Clean pipes flowing with the Living Water of Jesus, naturally create & sustain healthy systems. They don't put up with the flow of unrighteousness & injustice. It's simply not their modus operandi - but they also don't sit around wringing their hands either when the world acts the way it does - they have future hope. Healthy people naturally create healthy systems. People bearing the thoughts/heart of God, act like God. They love their neighbors as themselves.

T.S. Eliot described the current human endeavor as that of finding a system of order so perfect that we won't have to be good. The outward system will control it. The unicorn. A futile thought in light of the deceitful heart & sinful nature of humankind. In contrast to T.S. Eliot, Jesus says systems become good when the people within them are good. Systems don't make us good, but good people make good systems. Character.

Jesus didn't set us on a course to create governments, or revamp social constructs, or make & guard humanistic governmental laws. He set us on the course of making disciples - the Great Commission...the question is what does that entail & how's it done?

*"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.""*

Always remembering we're to emulate Christ in all ways, firstly, we recognize the authority of Christ & what he does with it. All authority in heaven & on earth...does he

establish a worldly kingdom plopping himself on a throne & incarcerate or kill all who would oppose him? No. Jesus doesn't use force & coercion & teaches his followers not to be power mongers either.

In Matthew 20 you'll remember the story of the two sons of Zebedee whose mother asks that her sons might sit on his right & left side in his kingdom (the places of power). The other disciples are incensed, and Jesus says, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Mt 20:25-28)

Jesus uses his power & authority in gathering his little band of followers & saying, "Go tell people about me. Make followers among every ethnic group on this earth." And he makes followers through relational sacrifice & love.

So, he doesn't use all this power & authority as others would. He does the thing which seems to take the most time & effort. Not expedient, but solid & long-lasting; seed-like. Not impersonal, institutional, or sensational, rather very personal & mundane, done in context of everyday life going about our tasks with others. What's more personal than addressing another's soul, character & eternal security in this world? Nothing.

So we're to share Jesus with people in the context of doing life with them - from a place of knowing Jesus intimately ourselves. Living examples of the Gospel, sharing its message. To baptize people when they decide to follow. To continually teach them the thoughts/heart of God as provided in the Scriptures under the lead of His Spirit.

To do this in a healthy atmosphere as outlined in 1 Peter 5:2-4, *"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."*

We need training. We're too busy to stop & feed ourselves. We don't spend enough time at the feet of Jesus. Do you know what the Gospel says? How to share it? If you need to get back to the basics, read *The Walk*, by Stephen Smallman. Write out your testimony as a practice using Scripture to explain what Christ has done in your life as preparation to share with someone. Memorize key verses from the Roman Road, or other places which will help you in your walk & witness to others. And above all, pray for a heart to be a Great Commission Christian, and to have opportunity to share with others.

Because, we're Great Commission Christians - Living Water wells up within each of us & overflows to others around us. Spiritual Formation & Discipleship overflow into Evangelism & the world's changed by Jesus through the ministry of His Body on earth - the Church.

Let's be Jesus to people, take a look at this video before we engage in worship again... [thelighthousefellowship.org/home/our-mission/](http://thelighthousefellowship.org/home/our-mission/)