

The Church's Mandate

Luke 24:36-49

Introduction

You're all familiar with the mask mandate. A mandate is an official order to carry out a task or to do something. God has a mandate for the church. And just like the mandate to wear masks, it's not a suggestion, but an order. And this doesn't come from the government, but from God, Himself. We call that mandate the Great Commission, found in **Matthew 28**—*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19)*. In **verses 45-49** of our Gospel lesson today, Jesus explains the mandate and tells us how and why we are to carry it out.

The Message—the Gospel

The message is the message of Scripture. The message of Scripture is salvation. Salvation comes through the cross of Jesus Christ. *"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Luke 24:46)*. That's what it is, no more and no less. Jesus Christ, the Son of God died on the cross to forgive our sins and rose the third day to give us eternal life.

The Program—Preaching Repentance to All

"Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations" (Luke 24:47). The message is not just that Jesus died on the cross, but that He died **FOR YOU**. Saving faith is not just an acceptance of an historical fact. Saving faith recognizes and believes that Jesus died for **me**. His body was broken for **me**. His blood was shed for **me**. We appropriate that forgiveness when we believe in Christ. Recognition of our sin and believing that Jesus died for us causes us to confess our sins to Him and repent of them.

The Authority—Apostolic Witness

This is how we witness for Jesus. But we must remember, when we're witnessing, we're not telling **our** story. We are telling **His** story. And the way to do that is to tell the stories of the original eyewitnesses, the apostles. We are telling their story, the story we have in Scripture. It's not about what Jesus did for me, although that can be a springboard into the conversation. We speak with authority when we speak the words of the apostles, when we tell the story of Jesus crucified and risen, just the way they told it.

The Power—the Promise of the Holy Spirit

You may be thinking that sounds like a big job, maybe a little scary. Well, don't worry. We don't do it on our own strength. *"And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49)*. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, He breathed on them and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22)*. What's the promise He's talking about? The disciples had the Spirit. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them in a unique way. They were baptized by Him, just as John the Baptizer predicted about Jesus — **(Luke 3:16)**. After that, we read about them being filled with the Holy Spirit. And they did supernatural things by His power. We

may not do supernatural things, but we have the power of the Holy Spirit to see us through this life. And to carry out the **CHURCH'S MANDATE**.

About the Power of the Spirit

Now, about the power of the Holy Spirit ... (Read **Colossians 1:28-29**). We receive the power of the Holy Spirit when we toil and struggle for God. We don't wait to feel stronger or for some sign from on high. And it's not about a good feeling. The word "struggling" in Greek is *agónizomai*, from which we get the word "agony." The reward is in the work itself.

The Means of Grace

God has also given us the Means of Grace – Word and Sacrament by which to strengthen our faith and empower us to tell the story of the salvation available to us only through Jesus Christ. When we are walking by faith and sharing the Gospel with others, we are carrying out the **CHURCH'S MANDATE**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
