

“The joy of God’s mission.” Luke 24:44-53

“Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. 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.” And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Let me ask you, how often do we remember and celebrate Jesus’ resurrection? Is it only once a year on Easter Sunday, or is it every week? How often do we remember Jesus’ incarnation and birth, is it just once a year at Christmas, or is it every week?

The same we can ask about the giving of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, about the Trinity, and the same we should ask about Mission Sunday Observance. Does it only matter once a year or shall we cherish this wonderful privilege every week?

The Great Commission given to the Church by the Risen Lord Jesus Christ is the very reason for the Church’s existence, for why we are here. We have this Great Commission recorded in all four Gospel accounts and in the book of Acts.

“Go and make disciples of all nations”, “go and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation”, “repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations”, “as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you [...] if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them”, “you are my witnesses”.

What do you picture considering what “the Great Commission” means for you?

We may have different strange ideas. Perhaps, we imagine knocking at our neighbours’ doors, feeling awkward and not knowing what to say and what to expect. Perhaps, we imagine our non-Christian friends or relatives getting upset with us as we keep disrupting their peace by bringing up the name of Jesus.

Maybe we picture giving some dollars to missionaries who travel to other countries and feeling satisfied with ourselves – yes! we supported the mission, job well done, that’s enough mission for us.

I don’t know what you picture in your mind when you hear this phrase “the Great Commission”, therefore, today I want to share some bits and pieces of how the Bible shapes our understanding of what this mission is about.

First question – **whose mission are we talking about?** Is it ours... or is it God's mission? We need to be clear about this; it is God's mission. The Triune God is God on mission. But then, what is this mission, how could we describe it?

We could say that it is about seeking after the lost, rescuing them from under the power of Satan, and bringing them into the divine fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and with all God's chosen people.

Now, when did God begin His mission? In the very beginning. In that ancient garden. When our first parents had been deceived and had lost their trust in the true God, when sin and death had come in the world, and humanity had been enslaved under the dark powers which we couldn't overcome on our own.

Do you remember who came looking for Adam? "Adam, where are you?" Who was it? Since ancient times the Church has believed that it was the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son, who came searching for us, to rescue us and to bring us back where we truly belong. It was the Son of God on a mission.

See how this changes how we see this event! Just a moment ago, Adam and Eve had done something, that will mean that the Son of God will need to be rejected, suffer and die in the most painful death imaginable. On the cross.

And knowing all of this, He comes to Adam and Eve and gives them the first Gospel promise; He promises that He Himself will mend what they had broken, even as it will cost Him His own life. This incredible promise kept faith for God's people for millennia and millennia through the OT age as they were waiting for that day.

Then, in the fullness of time the Son of God did come to fulfill His promise. How did that happen? Remember in Genesis 3 the promise was that the offspring of woman – not of man and woman – but someone born of woman will destroy the power of the ancient enemy and lift the curse of death.

What follows is of special interest for us. How was Jesus conceived? By the power of the Holy Spirit. Then "... born of the virgin Mary." Who descended upon Jesus when He was baptised? The Holy Spirit.

Who led Jesus to be tempted in the wilderness? The Holy Spirit. In whose power did Jesus perform all His miracles? In the power of the Holy Spirit. How was Jesus raised from the dead? In the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, why is this so significant, what does this mean for us?

When Jesus had accomplished the main part of His mission, when He had destroyed the power of the sin and death and devil on the cross, and when He ascended back to His Father, remember, who did He leave to continue His mission?

We could say - His disciples. We could say - the Church. Or we could say – the body of Christ. The body of Christ! And who did Jesus promise to send to His disciples? **"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)

Yes, He sent us the Holy Spirit. Can you see what wonderful picture emerges?! The body of Christ, that is – all of us, we are commissioned to continue God’s mission of seeking the lost, rescuing them from under the power of darkness and bringing them back into God’s family – each one of us according to our role in the body of Christ, wherever our God has placed us. And we are given the same Spirit in whose power Jesus accomplished His mission. We have the same mission, and we have the same Spirit. But there is more. How are people rescued from under the power of Satan, or how is the true faith created?

Remember, faith comes from... yes, from hearing the Good News about what Jesus, the Son of God, has done for us. There is something amazing, something almost unbelievable happening as we partake in Christ’s mission.

When any of God’s people speak the Good News, when we tell others about the Triune God, His love, His commitment, His grace, our message, our words are accompanied by no one else, but by... yes! by the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote in his letter to Thessalonians: **“Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit.”**

Or as he wrote in his letter to Galatians: **“Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?”** See, when we speak God’s message, when you speak God’s message, that is not just a sound of your words that your listeners hear, the Holy Spirit Himself is at work.

Calling them by the Gospel, enlightening them, creating in them new hearts and true faith. This is what happens when God’s people, when you speak the message about Jesus. Isn’t this amazing?!

Just think about this – we have this privilege to speak the words of eternal life, and as we speak, we literally offer and give eternal life to those who are willing to listen. Just think about the grandeur of what we are invited to participate in?!

You, by speaking God’s message, can give to someone *the gift of eternal life*. This is how we partake in God’s mission. By speaking. This is how He employs us in His mission. We all as God’s chosen people, we are the body of Christ, and the Spirit of God dwells in you and powers your message.

Isn’t this incredible?! The Triune God has chosen to involve us in His work of new creation. Us, as we are, imperfect and unworthy, little and rebellious creatures. It is speaking through us that the Triune God overcomes the power of darkness and gathers His family. Speaking through us...

This is a Biblical picture of what this mission is about. We certainly are not qualified to participate in such a magnificent venture. For just imagine how high are the stakes in this mission? We certainly don't deserve such honour and trust. And we can't even appreciate the grandeur of this mission. That's all true.

Besides, too often this mission seems like an afterthought to our other activities. Something we could do, when nothing else is left to do. Just think about how Christian congregations usually go about their budgets and plans.

Do we think and plan about God's mission first? What about our personal finance? Do we think about how to support God's mission first? Or think about our priorities? Do we think about how we can carry on Christ's mission among all people whom He has placed in our lives? Christ's mission! We often fear and are not comfortable to participate in it. If that sounds familiar, the comforting news is – we don't have to. You don't have to participate in this rescue mission that builds God's Kingdom.

No one must do it. The Father's favour to you, His fervent love, your salvation, your promised place in New Heavens and Earth, remember! they don't depend on how much you have done, or how many times you have proclaimed the Gospel, or how many have heard the Good News from you.

Your eternal fate is secure because of what Jesus Christ did for you. He has secured a place for you; more, He has gone to prepare that place for you. Now, He is waiting for you. You just need to cling to His promises, treasure them and rejoice in them. And do not forget that someone, who was on God's mission, has spoken those new life-creating words to you.

But if for us God's mission is an afterthought, it is us who are missing out on something very special. We are missing out on one of the greatest joys that we may have as Christians. When we are on mission together with our God.

Together with our God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

As we pray for those we care for and whom we want to see among God's people. As we curiously study Scripture, listen to sermons, attend Bible studies, talk with Pastor, and ask for the Spirit's guidance to give us wisdom, to teach us what to say, how to deliver that life-giving message.

As we engage with fellow brothers and sisters, sharing our experience, our God-given insights, pooling together our God given wisdom. As we rejoice in God-given opportunities to deliver the message of eternal life to those we love, and... God willing, we may witness a miracle, when we see that someone, who was an enemy of God, receives a new heart and becomes a child of God, our brother or sister.

There is so much each one of us can do. Easily. Almost effortlessly. [There are some suggestions in your bulletins.] For it is about God's mission. About Christ's mission. It is

this joy that our Triune God wants to share with us. That is what He invites us to experience. That is what His mission is about.

I can only pray that the Holy Spirit would help us to appreciate this wonderful gift of God, and if it pleases our good Lord, may He kindle in us the passion for His mission and use each one of us wherever He has placed us.

Grant us this joy, O Lord, the joy of your mission, grant it to us abundantly!

Amen.