

God's Vision

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[0 : 00] Happy New Year! This is the time of year that we often think of as a new beginning, and many people set New Year's resolutions, a time that we can begin thinking about ways we want to see ourselves different in the New Year, or, you know, different goals and things that we want to correct, like weight, or time management, money, jobs, stuff like that.

Well, I got to thinking, well, let me ask, how many of you set New Year's resolutions? Not many, just a handful, but we still thank you for those of you, because it would have broke my whole sermon this morning if we didn't have a few people set a New Year's resolution.

But anyway, we have a few of those resolutions, but I got to thinking, what are New Year's resolutions? And so I searched a little bit on the internet, and this is what I found. First of all, what exactly is a New Year's resolution?

It's a to-do list for the first week of January, right? Most New Year's resolutions end up getting broken in the first week of January, or possibly by the end of January.

Most New Year's resolutions don't see February. There's also two types of people that focus on resolutions. The first one is New Year's resolutions, spend more time on the treadmill, right?

[1 : 18] We want to set goals of ourself. Or you might be like Maxine here, and you try to break everybody else's New Year's resolution. Maxine says, I put out a box of donuts to see how many New Year's resolutions I can break on the first day.

I did that one for Fred, because I figured that's the type of guy he is. That he would just try to break people's New Year's resolutions. But unfortunately, like I said, most New Year's resolutions are short-lived.

We go into a new year, and we think about all the ways we would like to see ourselves be different in the new year, whether it's our weight or physical exercise, time management, money management, relationships, all kinds of things.

But most of them don't last beyond January, do they? Most of us, especially as we're adults, we're in those habits and routines. That's why we're the way we are, and it's hard to break out of those.

Well, this year, I want to challenge us all. Instead of trying to look for resolutions to make into the new year, and most of you didn't make one, so hopefully when you leave here today, you will.

[2 : 30] Instead of making resolutions on how we can change ourselves by physical appearance or other, I want to challenge you this year to make a goal, or a commitment might be a better term than a resolution.

A commitment to the Lord. As we enter into a new year, make a commitment that we're going to focus on our relationship with God this year, and we're going to grow deeper in a more intimate love relationship with Him in the coming year.

Now, when we make a goal, what do we have to do? We've got to make a plan of how we're going to do that. It may mean getting up early. It might mean, you know, making sure you've got an accountability partner or somebody holding you accountable.

It might be your spouse to get up, read your Bible, spend more time with the Lord this year. But also, and not just growing in our personal relationship with the Lord, but I want to challenge us to set a goal that we're going to make God known around us more.

And we're going to be involved in advancing the kingdom of God all around us. It's easy to live in the South. It's easy to live in Pickens County. And think everyone around us knows the gospel message.

[3 : 48] Everyone around us is aware of Christ. However, I think that's not true. We have churches on every street corner.

That is true. And a lot of people are connected. But I think there's a false gospel that's also proclaimed in a lot of churches today. And I think many around us, maybe even in your families, extended families or friends, co-workers, neighbors, and various people you know, how many of

them think, well, if I go to church, I'm okay.

Or if I have a head knowledge belief, I believe in Jesus, then I'll go to heaven. Or if I've been baptized and my name is upon the roll, then I'll go to heaven.

And that's not true, is it? I believe there are individuals right around us, right here in Pickens, Pickens County, maybe in our own families, that have never heard or never understood a clear and accurate presentation of the gospel where they understand the truth of why Jesus came.

Why did He come? That I'm a sinner and I can do nothing for myself. I cannot do anything to be set free from the penalty and the bondage of sin.

[5 : 09] And that's why Christ came to us. And it is only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It's only through a personal relationship with Him where we receive that free gift through faith that we might be saved.

And I think there are so many that are confused about that because I run into people that are Christian or they claim to be Christian, but then they question me, is Jesus really the only way to heaven?

Well, when a person asks me a question like that, I know from the very beginning they do not understand the true gospel message or they wouldn't ask that question. Because yes, Jesus is the only one who died for the sin of the world.

He's the only one who came and lived a sinless life and was able to take the sin of the world upon Himself to pay the penalty for that sin. And so as we enter into a new year this year, let me encourage you to make some goals or commitments or surrender more to the Lord to grow in your relationship with God, but also to be involved in making Him known and to be involved in helping to advance the kingdom of God in places like proclaiming the gospel message, in places where maybe people have not heard and make those goals and commitments in our life this year.

Have you ever asked yourself, why did God create the world to begin with? Have you ever wondered that? The Bible teaches us that God knew before He created the foundations of the earth, He knew we were sinners.

[6 : 48] He knew we would be sinners and that we would need Him to send His Son to die for our sin. And so have you ever wondered, why did God create anyway when He knew that we would mess up His perfect creation?

Have you ever wondered, then what has God been doing throughout history? You know, the Bible says that God created this perfect creation and we believe that He's sovereign, holy God, working, fulfilling, and bringing about His perfect will.

So what is that will? And what is He doing throughout history as He's working and He's bringing about that perfect will? Well, I want us to look at that today and hopefully when we leave here, we're going to have a deeper understanding of what God's vision or God's purpose was for His creation and what His purpose is for us today and how we can be a part of His will and His plan unfolding upon the earth today.

So if you have your Bibles, I'd like to ask you to open them with me, if you will, to Revelation. Revelation chapter 7, and also will be on the board. Revelation chapter 7, verses 9 and 10.

Now I always encourage you, if you have your Bible, to open your Bible and read along there because I don't want us to become unfamiliar with the Scriptures. And so many churches, individuals never take their Bibles and they totally rely upon the Scripture on the screen and it's a danger putting it up on the screen because then we get lazy.

[8 : 25] And I want us to stay, you know, very able to turn to Scripture passages and know where they are. We should be doing that as we study our Bibles throughout the weeks anyway.

But hopefully we won't get lazy and just depend upon it on the screen. But let's look together at Revelation 7, verses 9 and 10. After this I looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we just thank You today that we have Your Word and Your truth.

And through it, we can have an understanding more of who You are and Your will and Your purpose as You unfold Your perfect plan upon the earth and how You desire to include us in that and how we can be faithful and obedient to that.

So I pray today that You speak to every heart, everyone here, and help us to understand where You would have us to serve and be involved and be a part of Your will.

[9 : 52] And we thank You for that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. In this passage, we see a multitude that is so large that it says no one can count.

A multitude made up of people from every nation, every tribe, every language, and every people group throughout the world. And they're gathered around the throne.

What are they doing? I feel like we've stayed up too late and you're more lively than the 8 o'clock service, but I want to make sure the blood's still flowing.

What are they doing around the throne? They're worshipping. They're surrounding the throne and they're worshipping God, the Father and the Lamb, Jesus Christ. And here we see the fulfillment of everything God has been doing throughout history.

We see a fulfillment of what God's purpose was in creation in the very beginning and all that He's been doing throughout history from the very moment that He created.

[10 : 55] God has been working upon the earth, drawing people unto Himself and bringing people into the family of God, bringing them unto Himself to become worshipers of God so that one day for those who accept this free gift through faith in Jesus Christ, those who receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ will one day stand around the throne of God and bring worship and praise and glory unto Him.

That is why God created for the first place. He didn't create this glorious earth and people so that He could step in heaven and just do things for us as we say, Lord, give me this, give me this, do this, do this.

That's not why He created. He created for Himself. He created that we would bring glory and honor unto Him. And that's what He's been doing as throughout all of history He's drawing people unto Himself, drawing people unto Christ that we can come to faith in Jesus Christ and have our sins forgiven.

We can be set free from the penalty of sin and the bondage of sin in our life and we can one day stand in eternity around the throne of God and worship Him.

Now I hesitate to even say that because of the imagery or the picture I think that modern day movies and music and stuff paints of heaven being a boring place and we think about standing around the throne of God worshipping for eternity.

[12 : 31] Movies and music and maybe even poetry have made that sound like it's boring. I want to tell you something, there's going to be nothing boring about heaven. When we step into the presence of God and we come to a full knowledge of what Jesus Christ has done for us that we could not do for ourselves, that He took our sins upon Himself and He paid the ultimate price dying for our sin and that made a way for us to be delivered from the penalty and the bondage of sin and hell.

totally separated from God and yet because of Christ we're able to stand in the presence of God and worship Him and I want to tell you something, we're not going to have any other response in our hearts at that moment and that time except to worship and to praise and to thank Him and the more we come into that understanding right now in the here and the now the more we will worship and praise Him now but we will understand more fully one day when we stand in the presence of God in Heaven and come to a full knowledge and understanding of what He's done for us but the only response that we should really be giving is worship and praise to Him and Heaven will not be a boring place and I think we will do more than just stand around the throne and worship but it will not be boring in any sense of the imagination and it's certainly better than the alternative right?

It's going to be better than being separated from God for all eternity so this is God's vision when we think about what was God's vision or what was God's purpose for creating we see it here fleshed out in Revelation chapter 7 now as we think about our lives in light of God's vision as we think about who we are and how we live in light of God's vision I want to ask you how are you being a part of helping God's vision be fulfilled?

How are you being a part of helping the gospel or the kingdom of God to advance upon the earth? How is your life? How is my life?

How are we using the time that we have been given and the lives that we have been given? How are we using that to align with God's vision for creation to help draw people unto Himself?

[15 : 13] The Holy Spirit's the only one that can draw people to the Father and to the Son but God chooses to use us in that process and so how are we making ourselves available to be a part of that

process to share the gospel or to be a part of discipleship?

How are we being a part of seeing people come to faith in Jesus Christ and becoming worshipers of God the Father and the Lamb? I hope that as we enter into a new year this year and we think about that that part of our goals part of our commitments or if you want to use the word resolution is that we set these goals or resolutions in our life to be more available to God to be a part of His plan and to make ourselves available to Him that we can be a part of this vision of seeing people come to faith in Christ that we can make sure that everyone we know and around us has at least heard the gospel message they've heard an accurate and clear presentation of the gospel that they may have the opportunity to respond or not in Romans it tells us how can they believe if they have not heard and how can they hear unless someone goes and proclaims to them so those around us who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel how are they ever going to hear if someone with that clear understanding does not tell them and don't assume that people that are in church have an accurate understanding of the gospel you know

I went to a funeral at my last church and I won't tell you what denomination it was but I went into a different denominational church and some of our some of my church members sat down beside me and they used to attend that church and they got a book out of the pew that was in front of them and they opened it up and they pointed at a passage in it and said this is why we no longer attend this church and I started reading and in that religion that denomination within their beliefs they believe that you are saved through the baptismal waters meaning that if you go and you get baptized you're saved right how many believe that how many in the Baptist church actually believe it even though that's not what we teach that if you were baptized you were saved so we want to make sure those around us have a clear and accurate understanding that that is not salvation just walking forward and being baptized but having that personal relationship with the Lord and Jesus connects to this vision that we looked at in Revelation 7

Jesus connects to this perfectly in a command that he gives his followers right before he ascends back into heaven and this is a command that we're very familiar with but what is it what do we call it right before he ascended into heaven great commission thank you it's found in Matthew 28 verses 18 and 20 so let's turn to that and look with me if you will at this passage Matthew 28 verses 18 through 20 and Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age we see Jesus giving this command to his followers right before he ascends back into heaven and it aligns perfectly with the vision that we've looked at the vision of God in Revelation chapter 7 we see Jesus saying go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey not just teaching but teaching to obey everything I have commanded you now there's two elements in the Great Commission we often think of the Great Commission as purely evangelism right we all recognize this as a passage for missions and what would you expect from the missions pastor on a day like today other than a passage like this one it's evangelism but there's more to it there's more to the Great Commission than evangelism right what else is there make disciples that's exactly right discipleship there's evangelism and discipleship you know this is a command that Jesus gives to his believers not just a hand select or a few but to all believers it's not just for the pastors it's not just for deacons or for a hand select few throughout the congregation this was a command that Jesus really gave that we should all be observing within our lives each and every one of us should be about making disciples now often we interpret this scripture go and make disciples thinking well I've got to pick up my belongings and move to another country somewhere or move to another part of the country but I've got to get up and go but another translation or a better translation may be as you are going as you are living your life make disciples as you are living and everything and everything you do throughout your days whether it's as you go to work as you raise your children as you come to church as you do recreation whatever you're doing use your life in a way that is making disciples whether it's through evangelism or whether it's certainly through discipleship that as we are going we're a part of God's work and his plan we're making ourselves available to him that he can use us to make his name known so I want you to think for a moment at your life you might think back over this past year in 2016 you know this has been a good year for a lot of people it's also been a challenging year

I was thinking about how many saints and church members we I won't say lost but how many went to be with the Lord this year we had a significant number in this church to go be with the Lord and I know that they're there in his presence today and we can celebrate for that but as we look back over 2016 how were you involved in God's vision what were you doing with your life that was in connection to God's vision of seeing individuals come to become worshipers of him or to connect with the great commission of go and make disciples how did you use your life did you witness to even one person throughout the year did you go verbally and share the gospel with those around you in your own family and sometimes that can be the hardest place to begin isn't it in our own families

[23 : 16] I've got some family members that I do not believe are saved and it's a challenge it's a challenge to witness and share with them because well I don't know why why is it why is it so difficult to share with our own families but as you lived your life in 2016 how were you involved in making disciples if you're a parent and your children are still at home one of the places to begin in making disciples is with your children that is the first probably the greatest place that we can be involved because what does it profit us if we go out and we travel the world and yet our children grow up and do not know the Lord or they're not equipped to go into the world and to face the challenges of the world because we've not grounded them in the faith so as parents we should begin with our own homes our families our children and dads that solely rest mainly upon us it is our responsibility if we fail we're responsible and so as dads that means more than just bringing your children to church that is an important aspect of being in church setting an example for your children to let them see you in church serving in church being involved but that's not all there is to it we must take the responsibility of teaching them at home lead Bible studies at home look for those teaching moments at home where you can apply truths and things that have gone on in your children's lives to begin teaching them but as we look at our lives where are we connecting with God's vision or how are we being obedient to the great commission to go and make disciples you know there are numerous opportunities to do this besides just raising our children to be disciples there are numerous opportunities for you to be involved if you just look at the ministries within our church just within our church there are numerous ministries and opportunities to be involved evangelistically as well as discipleship you know

I could stand up here today and list a whole number of things that we do that you could be involved in and you might think well I'm not a Sunday school teacher or you know I can't go on mission trips well a lot of times these ministries need people behind the scenes too we need people behind the scenes most of you would not be hearing me this morning if we didn't have someone running sound most of us would not come here and worship if somebody didn't take care of the building we've got ministry opportunities that are behind the scenes that you can get involved in God has given us all spiritual gifts he's given us talents he's given us abilities that he desires for us to use within the church and so we can all get involved and make disciples we can all be involved in some way directly or indirectly in evangelism we also can look at other ministry opportunities outside the church we've tried to make some opportunities known to you over the years that you can be involved in things like cafe connection that's literally across the street from us dream center united christian ministries samaritan's purse things like this that you can be involved in to help support their ministries you may not be directly out on the front line in evangelism or discipleship but you're strengthening their ministries at times where you can be aiding them to be involved in that a lot of our mission trips are that very thing we've gone to help others and their ministries be stronger whether I think of

Dakota sunshine we've spent a lot of money there and a lot of man hours there and woman hours there I think of Jennifer Payne being up on the roof helping us put a roof on a building and so women you can be involved too but we've gone up there and we've worked and most of us have never come into contact directly with the Native American children that come to that camp but we've strengthened Dakota sunshine so that their ministry is greater so there's a lot of opportunities that you can get involved in and be a part of in helping our church's ministry as we reach out into our community or make the gospel known right here in Pickens or other parts certainly of the world now you may be thinking I can't do that I don't know enough I don't have enough skills I'm not in construction or I don't have enough training I don't have enough life experience you may be thinking all of that and I just want to remind you of a lady in

John chapter 4 that Jesus met we often refer to as the woman at the well Jesus was going from Jerusalem to Galilee and he had to pass through Samaria and he was fully man and so he was tired he was weary from traveling he wasn't driving his Honda down the Jerusalem Express or anything like that he was walking and he was thirsty and he came to Jacob's well and he sat down at the well and the disciples went into town to try to buy food and this lady comes out that Jesus engages in conversation with and this lady was an uneducated Samaritan woman who was living in a very adulterous and sinful lifestyle but you think about that story most of you know that story very well and I'm going to read a couple verses here in a moment in verse 28 and 30 as Jesus engaged in conversation with this lady and he begins to explain to her he is the Messiah what did she do well let's look in verse 28 John 4 28 so the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people come see a man who told me all that I ever did can this be the Christ what did the people do there was a sinful woman who was going to the well in the middle of the day because she probably didn't want to be harassed by the other women who went to the well early in the morning before the noonday heat did they listen to her or did they think she's crazy just ignore her look at verse 30 they went out of the town and were coming to him coming to Christ here's an adulterous Samaritan probably uneducated woman that Christ used really as a missionary in that village in that town to go and to say come meet a man who's told me everything about me come and they went out to inquire about Christ and so you may be sitting here thinking today

[30 : 48] I can't do that I don't have a bible college degree I didn't grow up in church I don't know enough I haven't been a Christian long enough when we look at the woman at the well it tears down every one of those excuses it begins to tear down every excuse you can imagine if you go throughout the scriptures we run into other characters and other people that God used to fulfill his purpose and his will people like Moses or David or I even think of Paul a man who was killing Christians hunting them down throwing them in prison and killing them and yet God saw fit to use him to be one of the greatest apostles that we've ever known when we look throughout scripture any excuse that we come up with of why we can't be involved in fulfilling the great commission and going and making disciples is torn apart by scripture and it all basically comes down to obedience faithfulness are we willing to make ourselves available to God are we going to put God first in our lives this new year and seek him with all of our heart to seek after him and make ourselves available for whatever God chooses to use us for are we willing to do that are we willing to get out of our comfort zone and even risk humiliating ourselves or just being uncomfortable to tell people about Jesus

Christ can you tell people your testimony not necessarily how you came to faith in Christ but what is God doing in your life today who is Christ to you why is he so important to you why do you worship him why do you live for him why do you spend time studying the Bible how is your life different today because you know Jesus Christ can we do that are we willing like I go back to the Christmas story and when the angel appeared to Mary and he told her she was going to have a baby and she was like how can this be and he explained it all and how did she end up ending that conversation I am your servant may it be as you have said are we willing to respond today and say Lord I am your servant take me use me and do with me what you will and don't just say it and then sit back down and wait for

God to come pick you up and do something with you but seek him follow him obey him do what he's called us to do through scripture Jesus said not everyone who comes to me and says Lord Lord will enter into the kingdom of God but only those who obey his commandments and what he's taught us are we living in obedience are we obeying all of God's word and message are we picking I like this part I don't know if I like that one I like this one over here how about I do that but let's skip that book don't like that too much are we willing to pick up the word of God and read it study it digest it and say I'm going to believe every word in this book and I'm going to obey it to the best of my power through the Holy Spirit living within me and at the end of 2017 we can look back and realize where we've grown and where

God has been working using us because success in sharing the gospel and making the kingdom advance the kingdom of God is not about us it's not about our gifts it's not about our talents it's not about resources and us doing anything it's about being faithful it's about being obedient and God is the one doing the work God is working through us and in us to draw people unto himself we can't do that I can never change a heart I have a hard enough time with my own heart but what we can do is

be obedient and to be faithful and trust that the Lord is the one working through our efforts trusting that God is drawing people unto himself God is working in their hearts God is opening their eyes God is setting them free from sin and things they've been in bondage to for years but how can they believe if they have not heard and how can they hear if someone does not go to them and proclaim to them

I want to tell you about another opportunity and I know time is ticking away here but I want to tell you about another opportunity to get involved this year to be a part of something exciting that I'm more excited about this than anything I've been involved in for 21 years of ministry and that's something Jim Gilstrap and I went to Birmingham Alabama last May and we got trained in an evangelism strategy called four fields and this is something that a Chinese pastor upon praying to God looking around him saying there's all these millions of Chinese living around me I'm one man how can I reach them all and through prayer and through seeking the Lord God led him to a strategy that is now referred to by many missionaries called the four fields and I stumbled upon this by accident because I had my eyes focused on something else and I was talking to a guy saying I need you to come here train us he's like

[37 : 06] I'll come train you in that but what you really need is this because we were looking for a strategy to focus in Peru with and so Jim and I went and we trained in what's called the four fields and in November we went to Peru and we've trained over a hundred people there we're going back in the end of February early March and I hope to hear a lot of things that have happened because the people were excited about it people were excited and they knew they could do it through the power of the Holy Spirit and it essentially is focused around home Bible study groups starting home Bible study groups and some of them were like we already have a home Bible study we can take these truths that you've taught us these strategies and apply and they're simple they're designed for this whole strategies designed to be or outreach to illiterate Chinese people living out in the bush or out in the country somewhere and being able to reach them raise them up from within because they don't have opportunities to go to seminary and places like that but train them from within to then go start another Bible study group and you begin reaching people through multiplication if you'd like to go with us to Peru and be a part of this then I've got the discipleship classes sign up sheets are in the foyer and one of those is entitled the four fields and I'm going to be teaching this strategy on

Sunday nights beginning January 15th and I hope that you'll be interested in maybe going with us sometime to Peru because this is the focus of our strategy in Peru from this point forward and this is what we're going to be doing however I believe that we can do it right here too and I know that because I'm doing it already Jim Gilstrap and I have already started a Bible study at Pickens Gardens apartment complex what I'd like to see is starting other Bible studies throughout the area so you may have no interest in going to Peru but you want to see people come to faith in Christ and you think I can host a home Bible study if you train me what to do and I want to tell you once you go through the training once you see what we're talking about it's simple anyone can lead a home Bible study when we were in Peru we had a man that was there at the training we taught him something and some of you heard me teach this on a Wednesday night it's called the sword Bible study method and all it is is asking six questions of any passage what do we learn about God what do we learn about people is there a sin to avoid a promise to hear an example to follow and a command to obey anybody can sit down with the scripture and begin learning something about God by asking those six simple questions and it's effective and it works this one man in Peru he said he came back the next day and he said I went to a Bible study that I'm involved in it at night and they looked at me and they said you're leading it today and he said he was not prepared at all he's been sitting for three days in a conference we were teaching he said oh wait he said I'll just use the sword Bible study method and so he went through that passage with them with the sword Bible study and he said the people got so excited they were digging into the scripture learning about the scripture and one lady said finally finally I can study the Bible on my own and not have to have someone else teach me I would say it's exciting if you've got a heart which I hope we all do and a passion for reaching lost people making disciples growing them and advancing by simple home Bible study groups sign up for the class four fields and we'll see you on Sunday night January 15th also I'm going to use this as an opportunity just another commercial for all of our discipleship classes out there we've got some really good ones but we also have one called single and parenting this is Brian came up with these numbers a few years ago there's seven or 18 million single parents living in the United States 18 million 17 million of them are unchurched 17 out of 18

are unchurched probably because they're worn out wiped out for I'm being a single parent but this is a class that's ministering to them a support group of other parents in the same boat with them and leading them in a study of scripture in the Bible if you know single parents out there that could benefit from a class like this please let them know about it and they can call here and talk to me if they want to know more but single and parenting it'll begin with all of our other discipleship classes on

January the 15th let me conclude this morning by saying this we may hear all this you think it's great Jeff that you're excited about this but you've been to seminary it's great that you went to that training you know I just can't do that that's not me I'm not skilled I don't have enough knowledge I want to tell you something of why we cannot fail when we're willing to be obedient and faithful and just make ourselves available look back at the great commission Matthew and look at verse 18 with me if you will treat it together and Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me Jesus is saying all authority has been given to me by the father in heaven and on earth it's a lot of authority Jesus is the ultimate authority he's authority over life authority over death authority over time authority over nature sickness disease spirits anything you can imagine anything you can think of Jesus has been given all authority and then what does it say next the first word of verse 19 says go go therefore and make disciples he's implying I've been given all authority and I'm sending you out under that authority you are to go under the authority of Jesus Christ and the name of Christ and go out representing him in the world in which we live now jump down to verse 20 read with me verse 20 says teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age you hear that Jesus is saying go in my authority oh and guess what guess what I'm going to go with you you're not going alone Jesus is saying I'm going to be there with you how can you fail how can you fail if you make yourself available and be obedient to what he said to do and go in his authority and know that he's with us where we fail as we get things screwed up and we look at it from a worldly perspective and not a God perspective so many times we think well I'll go witness and they won't accept Christ there was a pastor in Peru that I was told he said he went out witness to somebody they didn't receive Christ and he said well I'll never do that again it's not what the scriptures say if we're measuring it like a gunfighter put notches in our belt then yeah we'll probably fail but if we're looking at from the perspective of God of being obedient and being faithful we can't lose because it's up to God working in people's lives drawing them unto himself he's just allowing us to be a part of that process of going and communicating and proclaiming that gospel what a wonderful privilege we've been given to share that with the people that we know and come into contact with sometimes even in foreign lands that we've been given and know that we can't fail we also hear people sometimes say they're scared to offend someone they don't want to say anything to them because they're afraid they'll offend them are you more afraid of offending someone or them going to hell would we rather them go to hell and not be mad at us because we offended them they're going to be really offended when they are thrown in hell and realize you had the answers and you didn't tell them we've got to be willing to risk the relationships for people in our lives that we love our neighbors our co-workers or people that we come into contact with we've got to risk that relationship in order to tell them the truth that's what real love is and Jesus loved us enough to come and die for us what is holding us back what's keeping us from going and telling others the truth of the gospel not a watered down not a false gospel but a genuine gospel message of the truth I ran across some statistics a few years ago

[47 : 01] George Barna he asked teenagers in the United States how many of them were Christians 85 percent claimed to be Christians but his questionnaire was designed to bring it on down and to how many of you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ you know how many of them had it I'll give you a hint you can count it on one hand four percent 85 percent claim to be Christian in America 4 percent claim to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that's what it's all about it's about knowing Christ about knowing him and surrendering our lives to him and receiving that free gift of salvation through faith and obeying what he's told us to do from that point on salvation is not based on our obedience but we're obedient because we've come to faith in him let's go to the Lord in prayer father we thank you for this day what a glorious day and a glorious way to begin a new year to enter into your house and to stand together with my brothers and sisters in Christ and to worship you what a glorious way to spend our time in the word of God and learning more about you and how you desire for us to live I pray Lord today that as we leave this place we leave with a desire and a commitment to live our lives better this year for you to walk closer with you

this year to spend more time in the word of God this year and to be available to you for you to use us in whatever way you see fit and we praise you we thank you for that in Jesus name amen