

Matthew 28:18-20 - The Right Tool for the Job

**Matthew 28:18-20 - <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

If we had Vincent Van Gogh in our midst, the famous painter of the piece the starry night, and we set a large canvas in front of him and commissioned him to paint a masterpiece work of art to hand up in the fellowship area of the church, but all we gave him to do the job was the canvas, he would probably look at us and say I can't do it! What do you mean you can't do it? Even a talented painter like Van Gogh would not be able to do the job if he didn't have the right tools to do so! The artist needs a paintbrush and paint in order to be able to properly carry out his work. Likewise, in order to connect people to Christ, God gives humans tools.

The great commission that Jesus speaks, lays out one of our great purposes to exist as Christians. We are to go and tell the world about the life saving message of Jesus! There is the canvas! God has placed us in this world with a message that is life saving! He has instructed us to tell others about that message, and he says here is the place that I want you to do it! In the wide scope of things the entire world is our canvas. Child, adult, young, old, every nation! We are to look beyond ourselves culturally, we are to look beyond ourselves socioeconomically and we are supposed to share! In the narrow scope of things God has given us our canvas. He has placed us into community that is full of different cultures, he has placed us into a neighbourhood where people walk in front of your doors each day. There are people around us who are looking for spiritual answers! The canvas is there in front of us and it is obvious there are people who need Jesus. So the question becomes what are the tools to use!

Well for the disciples for quite a while it was easy! Don't worry about it, Jesus will be the one to do the work! He was healing, he was forgiving people's sins. The disciples were along for the ride to see how Jesus would carry out his work! But it wasn't always going to be that way, yes, Jesus would always be the one that would supply the results of ministry work, but a time was coming when Jesus would be going back to heaven and empowering Christians to be the ones who would carry out the work! That time was coming very soon for the disciples, and that time is now for us! But Jesus wasn't going to leave his disciples with a massive canvas to work with and no tools or instructions on what to do. He doesn't leave us without the proper tools to carry out the work that he has commissioned us to do, Rather he says here is your tool, the Gospel!

You have the tool that is considered the very power of God. Go and baptize! Spiritually we are born as people who are dead in our sins and God says that through baptism he brings us to life, he gives us a rebirth and renewal by the spirit! Spiritually we are born into a hostile relationship with God. Enemies who want to have nothing to do with God or things relating to God, yet in baptism God says he adopts you into his family and your relationship is completely changed! Spiritually we are born as people who are covered in the dirt and stench of our sin and in baptism God promises that we are washed clean to live a life in the freedom of forgiveness. Spiritually we have so many needs as human beings, and through baptism God fulfills so many of those needs! Baptism is a tool that the Holy Spirit uses to create faith in people who are faithless! But we must remember that baptism is not some sort of magical cloak that covers over us and just because we are baptized means that we will be going to heaven. God says be on your guard so that you do not fall from your secure position! Go and use the tool of baptism, but don't stop there!

If we think that baptism is the only tool for carrying out God's saving work that would be similar to thinking that you can build a skyscraper with just a backhoe. Sure you need the

backhoe to help dig up and set the foundation, but you cannot build the entire skyscraper with just that! You will need other tools. Use the Word to continue to teach! This shapes the way that we continue to carry out ministry work. We bring the gospel through baptism, but then we must have opportunity to be surrounded by the Word! Through worship we are fed spiritually, through ministry programs, like Sunday School, Bible Study and various small groups we gather around the Word to grow together. But this growing doesn't just happen in the church! Consider the role of teaching that parents, godparents, and friends have to strengthen and encourage in the faith or even to bring to faith! We are all disciples who are commissioned to work on this canvas and God gives us the tool of his Gospel to be the power that creates and strengthens faith.

God calls us as Christians to go! But many times I don't feel that God has equipped me with the correct tools. I find myself time and time again wondering, how do we reach people. Lord I have tried to win them over by being there to listen and support them, I have tried to win them over by being a helping hand, I have tried to get them to come to church by telling them we have this wonderful program set up for them, but nothing seems to be working! I so often catch myself trying to build the foundation of faith using my own tools, and sure we may be able to get the building started in that way, but in every relationship and in every program, God is giving me an opportunity to put to use the tools that are effective! Maybe the reason you came for the first time or someone got you in the building was the meal before church, or was the opportunity to be surrounded by a community, and maybe this is what keeps you coming back, but that's not what makes you a Christian. Because if the only reason I consider myself to be a Christian is the good community I am surrounded by, than I'm really no Christian at all! Deep down we all understand that we had a problem, I alone am not enough to stand before God! And I need a Saviour to work on my heart.

God gives us the tools that work for that problem! Baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God began a life-giving work in you! Dead in your sin you needed life, and nothing you could do on your own, no other person's goodness towards you could save you from your lost state, but faith worked into your heart through the power of the Holy Spirit brought forth a new birth into a living hope that assures you of your sins forgiven! Baptism sparked the life of faith and now moved by the Holy Spirit who was graciously poured out on you through your baptism, God now pierces your heart each day with the tool of his Word. The Word of God that baptism which we are brought into is centred around one person, and that is the heart and soul of your salvation! There is no salvation, there is no church, without Jesus, and we proclaim his name as our greatest tool to spread the gospel.

The tool of Christ paints the picture for us. Lost and separated from God due to our sin, we needed someone to take our place! The punishment that my sin rightly earned was a criminals death, but a perfectly innocent Saviour took my place. His blood shed on that cross to declare the world innocent is not just for the world but it's for you! And it becomes so personal to you in baptism. As the water pours over your head you are assured that, Jesus blood on the cross cleanses you from every sin! The picture is clear, though I am so undeserving, Jesus is so loving! Though I am so unfaithful, Jesus is always faithful! My problem has been solved! I can stand before God, not because I have lived a mostly good life, but because Jesus has lived a perfect life for me.

Let's paint that picture on the canvas that God has laid out for us! As we meet people and as we see the opportunities that God has placed before us, unveil the gospel to them through your actions and words. Help others see what God's love means for you, and then help them experience that love by sharing the message. And as you do so don't forget, your God goes with you. Every hour of every day your God is there. Guiding you in your life of faith, and commissioning you to work in his field to paint the picture of salvation clearly to many more!

The canvas is there - we know people need to hear about Jesus! The tools are there, we trust that baptism and the Word of God is powerful, and God promises to be there too and

bles your efforts! Let the tool of the gospel shape your heart, and in the joy of the gospel let's tell others about it! Those efforts go forth with God's power!