DAY 6:

Your Turn

Main Text

The Bible says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" **(Matthew 24:19, 20).**

*[**NOTE TO PRESENTER:** The emphasis of today's message is the call of God for each of His followers to join the gospel chorus, the group that shares the news of salvation with the world.]*

I hope that this week of prayer has been a blessing to you. We've been examining the special kingdom of God that came when Jesus, the Messiah, arrived on earth. The Prophet John said of Jesus: "He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men" (John 1:2-3, NASB). That's a pretty powerful statement, don't you think?

From this statement we immediately learn that Jesus was no ordinary person. He was literally from out of this world, and things He did and thought were equally supernatural. It should come as no surprise then that when Jesus died, His disciples were distraught. The One to whom they had pinned all their hopes and dreams was now dead. No more water into wine. No more exorcisms. No more miraculous healings. No more powerful preaching. No more bear hugs and words of encouragement. All they had now were memories of the times they had with Jesus, and that just was not cutting it.

Ellen G. White writes this about the disciples following the death of Jesus:

"After the death of Christ the disciples were well-nigh overcome by discouragement. Their Master had been rejected, condemned, and crucified. The priests and rulers had declared scornfully, "He

saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him" (Matthew 27:42). The sun of the disciples' hope had set, and night settled down upon their hearts. Often they repeated the words, 'We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). Lonely and sick at heart, they remembered His words, 'If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31). "Jesus had several times attempted to open the future to His disciples, but they had not cared to think about what He said. Because of this His death had come to them as a surprise; and afterward, as they reviewed the past and saw the result of their unbelief, they were filled with sorrow" (*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 25).

It was at this point, during the darkest moment of their sadness, that the risen Jesus appeared to them. Acts 1: 3 says, "To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of* forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." Locked in a room and fearful that the people who crucified Jesus would come after them, Jesus appeared to the disciples.

Did you notice a key phrase in that statement? What did Jesus speak to the disciples about? Let's say it together: THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

When Jesus appeared to the disciples, Ellen White notes that He prepared them for life ahead. For forty days He helped and encouraged them, lifted and blessed them, directed and empowered them. But Jesus spent more time talking to them about the kingdom of God than He did about anything else. Jesus challenged the disciples to do something for Him. Do you know what He asked them to do? Let's look at Matthew 28:19-20.

Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This statement is called the great Gospel Commission. Do you know what "commission" means? To commission someone is to give that person an instruction or command, a duty, a responsibility, a task, a project, a job, an assignment.

Jesus was not ***asking*** the disciples to go teach people about the kingdom—He was ***commanding*** them to do it. He's saying, in effect, after all that I have done for you, and all that you have seen me do for others, having now risen from the dead, I am passing my mantle to you. I want you to tell the whole world—every group of people you can find—about the good news of salvation.

They were commanded to do some very specific things. What were they called to do?

1. Make disciples of all nations.
2. Baptize people. Baptism is the public symbol that one has given his or her heart to God and is seeking to be born again, made new, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (John 3).
3. Teach them about kingdom living. Teach them how to observe the commandments and how to live in relationship with Christ.

Is there a bigger calling in the world than this one? Is there anything more compelling than helping men and women, boys and girls, come to know Jesus? I don't think so! The disciples' heads must have been spinning as they listened to Jesus' words. Yet, He did not send them out alone.

Ellen White notes, "The gospel commission is the great missionary charter of Christ's kingdom. The disciples were to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy. They were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go to the people with their message" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, P. 28).

A job this big cannot be done with mere human skill and ingenuity. Jesus knew this to be true. We learned earlier this week that Jesus never sends out His disciples to do His work without first equipping them to do it. This time would be no different.

To get them ready for this awesome moment, Jesus told them to wait in the room where they were until something very special happened. What were they supposed to wait for? Does anyone know?

They were supposed to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Let's go to Acts 1, beginning at verse 6: "Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Did you notice that even at this point, the disciples were still having trouble understanding what the whole kingdom was about? They were still looking for the Messiah to restore the kingdom of Israel to its former glory. As we will see at the end of this week, this kingdom—the full kingdom of God that rules over all the earth—will not come until the Second Coming of Jesus. But let's not stop there.

***[NOTE TO PRESENTER:** This is one of the high points of this week's study. Feel free to be enthusiastic!]*

Jesus told the disciples that great power was going to come upon them in the form of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would give them power to be God's witness in their neighborhood, the surrounding towns, and the far reaches of the globe. Isn't that an awesome promise? Don't you want that kind of power?

The Bible tells us that when the Holy Spirit came on them, they did amazing things! They spoke in foreign languages so that those from other countries and territories could understand them (Acts 2:1-8). The Apostle Peter preached a sermon and 3,000 people gave their lives to God (Acts 2:14-42).

Acts 8:12 says: "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike." Get the picture? The disciples had remained true to God's message. The preached the good news of the kingdom and they talked about Jesus! It really doesn't get any better than that for a Christian. That's what we're about. That's what we are commanded to do. It is in doing this that we please God most.

Appeal

We've come to the end of this very challenging message. Jesus is calling each of us to "get in the game," step on the field, make our mark. How do we do it? By simply accepting God's call to share the Great Commission.

The appeal this evening will be a bit different. I won't ask you to come to the front or raise your hand. Tonight I would like everyone to quickly form into groups of two or three. Once you have done that, here is your task.

Each person is to think of one thing that they can do to share the good news of what Jesus has done for us with someone tomorrow. Maybe you will post a message on Facebook. Maybe you will tweet something. Maybe you will send a card to someone who needs encouragement. Maybe you will pass a truth-filled piece of literature to someone. Whatever it is, your goal is to leave tonight with one spiritual "to-do" on your priority list for tomorrow. Once you have come up with something, share it with your group.

[Allow three minutes for the groups to discuss and share together. Close the session by asking the groups to pray for each other, asking God to help us follow through on our commission to spread the good news with someone tomorrow.]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the social atmosphere like at the time when Jesus was crucified? What were some of the ways that the disciples responded to Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion?

2. Do you believe that the Holy Spirit still comes over people as He did the disciples on the day of Pentecost? Explain your response.

3. When Jesus passed the torch to the disciples, He empowered them to be effective witnesses for Him. What equipment has God given you to share His gospel with the world? In other words, what are your spiritual gifts?

4. What parts of the great commission should be performed by different people in the church-pastors, elders, Bible workers, members, etc.? Are there any roles that are reserved for certain people and not others?

The early adolence (11-14) years can be an incredibly challenging life stage. Small groups can offer safety and a place of belonging for youth as they encounter life change together. Check out the small group covenant on page 67.