

“BEYOND THE WALLS (#2): GO!”  
(Matthew 28:19; Romans 10:13-15)  
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**[PROP NEEDED: PPT Slideshow of work from “Great Day of Service”]**

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 9-16-07]

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1. Read Texts: Matthew 28:19; Romans 10:13-15 and Pray.
2. Last Sunday we began a new sermon series called “Beyond The Walls” in which we’re exploring what it means for followers of Jesus to live out their faith beyond the confines of the institutional church.

A–We heard some examples of this last week from the sharing of several of our members who experienced the power and presence of God in remarkable ways on our church’s recent mission trips to New Orleans, Kenya, and Mountain T.O.P., Tennessee.

B–But of course, I hope we all understand that the mission and ministry of God doesn’t just happen when we go on trips out of town somewhere, but also right here at home in our own backyard.

C–Just yesterday, over 160 of us experienced this in a powerful way through our church’s first annual “Great Day of Service.”

1–It was an opportunity for our entire church membership to go literally “beyond the (physical) walls” of our church *building* in order to *directly* touch the lives of people in our community through acts of service.

2–Let’s watch a short slideshow of a few things that happened yesterday...  
**[Show PPT slideshow with music from song “Take Our Hands”]**

D–Now, if you weren’t able to participate yesterday, I hope you’ll make plans to do so next year, because what we saw here was the church actually *being* the church.

–II–

3. You know, too often today we think of the “church” as consisting of our building, or our worship services, Sunday School classes, committee meetings, or the fellowship suppers that take place *within the walls* of our building – so that when we come to this *place*, we tell people that we’re “*going to church*.”

A–But probably most of us grew up learning the simple children’s song “I Am the Church” – do you remember the words? (United Methodist Hymnal #558)

*“The church is not a building. The church is not a steeple.*

*The church is not a resting place, the church is a people.*

*I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together.*

*All who follow Jesus all around the world; Yes, we’re the church together.”*

B–Now, while this is a cute song, and it certainly corrects *some* misunderstandings about exactly what the “church” is, biblically there’s much more to the “church” than just the “people.”

4. Take today’s two scriptures, for example.

A–They’re both a call for Jesus’ followers to *take action* and DO something with their faith:

1–The Matthew 28 verse has often been called Jesus’ “Great Commission,” where he directs all who follow him to “*GO... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*”

2–And the Romans 10 passage is a rhetorical question from the apostle Paul, reminding us that if we want others to come to faith in Christ as *we* have, then we can’t wait for them to come to us; we must instead be the “feet” of Jesus and GO to them!

3–And you’ll notice that the title of today’s message comes from this calling of God in both passages to DO something with our faith = we’re to “**GO!**”

B–Both of these scriptures remind us that while the “Church” of Jesus is not defined by a building or the things that happen within it, neither is it defined *merely* as God’s people focused *inwardly*, living for *themselves*.

C–Instead, these verses indicate that the “Church” of Jesus Christ is the people of God (yes); ...but it’s these same people being active *out in the world around them* – ...

1–...That a “church” is only a biblical “church” when it gets “Beyond the Walls” of its buildings and programs and *GOES* into the world around it.

2–...That biblically, “church work” is not really what we do *here* (within the confines of these buildings), but it’s what we do *out there* in our community – in our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, the grocery store, gym, and the mall.

D–And that’s precisely what our “Great Day of Service” was all about yesterday: ...helping and serving people in our community and world.

5. So WHY exactly is it this way? WHY is it that God says we need to “GO!” outside our walls and into the world around us? Why can’t we just receive Christ and be content with our worship services, bible studies, and Sunday School classes right here at 2325 Roswell Rd.?

–III–

6. Well, in the time we’ve got left, I want to briefly share at least **three simple reasons WHY I believe each and every one of us who claims to follow Jesus needs to be involved in the work of mission** in some way, shape or form; and then I want to address at least one excuse we often hear about why we *can’t*. (*You’ll find blanks for these in your bulletin “Sermon Notes”*)

A–The **FIRST** reason that I believe every Christian needs to be involved in the work of mission is that **God commands it**.

1–Both of today’s scriptures make it clear that “going” & “being sent” out into the world as an ambassador for God is NOT optional for one who claims the name of Jesus – it’s part of the “job responsibility” that goes along with being a Christian.

2–I once heard it put very bluntly this way:

...The first two letters of the word “God” are GO;

...The first three letters of the word Satan are SAT.

3–You see, we’re to GO into the world to do mission 1st because God commands it.

B–But there’s a **SECOND** reason; and that is that **Others need it**.

1–The Romans passage was written kind of “tongue-in-cheek” to highlight the obvious truth that others will not experience the “love and light of Jesus” unless we TAKE him to them.

2–Some of you’ve heard me say before:

–OUR behavior out in the world may be the only “Bible” that some ever read;

–OUR life may be the only “church” some people ever attend;

–WE may be the only Jesus that some ever see.

3–[STORY OF MERCEDES BENZ CRASH TEST]

A number of years ago, a Mercedes Benz commercial showed their car with a new energy-absorbing body colliding with a cement wall during a safety test. And since other car companies were copying the product, the company was asked why they weren’t enforcing their patent on it. And the company spokesperson replied “*Because some things in life are too important not to share.*”<sup>1</sup>

4–Friends, if God has truly blessed us, then we won’t need to be told we are *supposed* to share and be in mission; No. We’ll *want* to, because others *need* what *we* have.<sup>2</sup>

C–A **THIRD** and final reason that I believe all Christians need to be involved in the work of mission is that **We’re here today because of it** – that is: you and I are Christians today because someone *before us* took the time & energy to share & pass the gospel on to us.

1–I always get a chuckle out of those who say they don’t need the institutional church in order to be a Christian– that they can learn about Jesus from their Bible at home.

2–Hello?! *Where* did our Bible come from? *Why* do we have it available in English the comfort of our home in the first place? ...because the *institutional church* was obedient to God in writing it, passing it to future generations, and translating it into languages we understand today.

3–This, friends, is the work of mission. If it had not been for the missions of *others*, then where would *we* be today?

7. Now before we wrap up, let me **address one common excuse** I often hear people give about why they can't do what we're describing today.

A–I believe this one excuse actually manifests itself in many different forms, such as:

*"I don't feel called to be on the Missions Committee."*

*"I serve Christ in other ways in our church, like Trustees or Finance Committee."*

And *"I'm not called to go out of town or overseas. That's what we pay missionaries to do."*

These are all just three ways to say: *"Missions is not MY job!"*

B–Well, let's be clear about several things:

1–When I say that every Christian is called to be involved in the work of mission, I'm NOT saying that every Christian is called to serve on a "Missions Committee or Team" of a local church somewhere. <sup>3</sup>

2–Neither am I saying that local church committees, classes or groups (like Trustees or Finance) are NOT doing a type of ministry or service for Christ, or that we don't need the service or work of career "missionaries."

C–But what I AM saying is that today's two scriptures remind us that biblical mission is NOT the work of a small committee or group in the church, nor is it *merely* the work of individuals who have a specific gift or calling to be "missionaries."

1–Such groups and people can act as a "conscience" to remind the *rest* of us of our calling to be in mission, and they can provide intentional *outlets* and *opportunities* for mission (such as trips and "Great Days of Service").

2–But biblically, missions is the work of ALL the people of God out in the world, and is therefore the responsibility and calling of each and every Christian.

8. Why? Because (1)God commands it; (2)Others need it; and (3)We're here today because of it.

A–Turn to the person next to you and say, *"You are a missionary."* ...Go ahead and do it.

B– Now, whether we believe or practice it or not, that IS the biblical truth.

1–In the words of a contemporary Christian musician I once heard, *"Either we're a missionary or we're a mission project."* <sup>4</sup>

2–Jesus said **"GO!"** ...Are we?

9. [PRAY]

**ENDNOTES:**

1. Jim Beranek (Parkersburg, Iowa), cited in Leadership magazine (Volume 12, Number 3).
2. I don't think the disciples became missionaries merely because Jesus commanded it. Instead, in the words of one author, "*The disciples of Christ did not proclaim the gospel because it was their duty--they did it because they could do nothing else*" [Croft M. Pentz, The Complete Book of Zingers (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1990)].
3. The great 19<sup>th</sup>-century evangelist Oswald Chambers once said that "*The special person called to do missionary work is every person who is a member of the church of Christ. The call does not come to a chosen few, it is to every one of us.*" [Chambers (1874-1917), cited in Edythe Draper, Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), Entry #7784]. A century earlier, Henry Martyn wrote "*The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to him, the more intensely missionary we must become*" [Martyn (1781-1812), cited in Draper, Entry #7785].
4. Contemporary Christian Musician Babbie Mason, spoken at the "Vision 2000" Launch Event for the North Georgia United Methodist Conference in downtown Atlanta at the Georgia Dome (Fall 1994). Along the same lines, another author put it this way: "*Every heart without Christ is a mission field--every heart with Christ is a missionary*" [Croft M. Pentz, The Complete Book of Zingers (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1990)].