



SERMON OUTLINE

Taking the gospel beyond your Church's comfort zone



For the past 2,000 years, Christians have been praying for the fulfilment of the Great Commission and they have been going out to share the good news of Jesus with people from different tribes and nations.

The work is not finished yet.

Did you know that today there are more than 3 billion people who don't know about God's love for them? So, it's time to take a radical stand and say, "We will do something to take the gospel beyond our church's comfort zone!"

Here is what Jesus said to his disciples before he ascended into heaven:

Read Matthew 28:16 - 20

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and 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 reflect on Jesus' command to 'go and make disciples of all nations' we realise that nothing matters more than sharing the gospel with people who haven't heard it, and who have no contact with Christians or with churches.

The reason why you and I are still on God's earth, and why our church is here, is to make Jesus known to all.

We have to see ourselves as disciples, as missionaries, as individuals, families and communities whom God has called to play their part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The future of the church depends upon it. The spiritual destinies of countless men, women and children around the world depend upon it.

In Revelation 7 we see people from every nation, tribe, people and language worshipping the Lord together in heaven.

What an amazing sight that must be!

But how do we get there, when right now, so many people in remote parts of the world, in communities hostile to the gospel, in towns and villages and refugee camps don't know Jesus?

The birth of the early church in Acts 2 provides a model, a footprint we can use for reaching the unreached people groups of today. So, let us look together at these biblical principles for stepping out of our comfort zone into the world and into communities that God loves.

1. The Holy Spirit is our guide who paves the way for us to reach the unreached

Turn to Acts 1:8 where Jesus tells us, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (NIV)

You and I cannot reach the unreached on our own. The only way we can step out of the church's doors and tell others about Jesus is because the Holy Spirit will empower us.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples.

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."

No other organisation or institution in the whole world has the Holy Spirit but the Church.

Let's stop for a moment to reflect on this.

God has given us the Holy Spirit - His supernatural power - so we can join in the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. So, when we get out of here to reach the world, we do so in the power of the Spirit, in His presence and under his guidance.

I would like to invite you to ask God this week to pour out His Holy Spirit afresh into your life and to show you how and where He wants you to reach the unreached with the gospel.

2. God will make every communication channel available to us

In Acts 2:5-7, we read how the early Christians began to speak in different tongues and how those around them could understand what they were saying.

On Pentecost day the crowds in Jerusalem came from many nations. The apostles could not have communicated with them using just one language, so the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in the native languages of those who were listening.

What these verses tell us that we won't finish the task unless we speak the languages of the people we are reaching. We need to make sure the voice of Jesus is heard loud and clear in a heart language that people understand.

Ministries like Reach Beyond that utilise radio, the web and social media channels are already playing a key role in sharing about Jesus in a language that people understand.

Here is a short story that illustrates this principle:

An electrician was installing electrical wiring in a house in Quito, Ecuador. The project was going to take 3 days. When he arrived at the house, the homeowner was listening to a Christian radio station called HCJB. This is one of Reach Beyond's media partners in Ecuador.

The electrician had no interest in religion and asked her to turn it off. She told him that it was her house and it would stay on! After three days of listening he had accepted Jesus as his Saviour, now he is a deacon in the church and is still listening to HCJB!

But not just radio. Also social media channels, especially in countries 'closed' to the gospel.

Here is just another example of reaching the unreached through a multi-channel approach.

A Reach Beyond worker who serves in the Middle East is using social media as an outreach tool, and from conversations online they get to meet seekers and invite them to accept Jesus. On one occasion, when a young Christian friend died, over 100 of his unchurched friends visited the fellowship for his memorial service. Two young people re-committed their lives to Christ after the service.

If we are to step outside our church's comfort zone, we need to be using all available channels to make sure that the gospel is heard in every culture.

3. Everyone has a spiritual gift they can use for reaching the unreached

To fulfil the Great Commission, we need everyone to participate. We are not spectators – we are an army of God's people.

This is what Peter spoke about in Acts 2:17 -18 when he said: *“In the Last Days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I’ll pour out my Spirit on those who serve me, men and women both, and they’ll prophesy”* (Acts 2:17-18 The Message).

The passage mentions sons, daughters, young men, old men, and women.

That is all of us.

So, my question to you today is: What is the spiritual gift that you can use to reach the unreached?

Perhaps you can take up the 30 Day Prayer Challenge for the Unreached and pray every day for a few minutes for an unreached people group?

You can sign up for this at: www.reachbeyond.org.uk/30dayprayerchallenge

Maybe you could volunteer some of your time to serve with a local charity that engages with immigrants or international students? You can meet the unreached here at your doorstep because the world has come to the UK too. You don't have to travel far to meet people from other cultures who have never heard about Jesus!

Or maybe you have the gift of teaching, so you can guide seekers into understanding God's Word or help new Christians to grow in their faith?

Proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating it through acts of love, service and compassion always go hand in hand.

So, think and pray about these things: how can we be the hands of Jesus to those in need? How can we help people to see Jesus' love in action?

4. Teaching God's Word is an integral part of reaching the unreached

We can show love and we can care for people, but what will really transform their hearts is God's Word. It's the truth that sets us free. It gives us new hope and makes us citizens of God's Kingdom. No other message can turn sinners into saints.

Have you noticed how Peter's sermon (Acts 2:16-26) on the first day of Pentecost was full of God's Word? He focused on what God was doing in those days and reminded them how the prophecies of old were being fulfilled.

Then he went on to tell the crowds about Jesus and what He had done for them. Peter also invited them to become followers of Jesus.

When those first believers asked what they must do – he told them to repent and be baptised.

Read Acts 2: 40 – 42 (NIV)

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Why was God's Word so important in the early church? Because without knowing the Scriptures you can't reach the unreached.

For many years, when Reach Beyond was broadcasting into Russia behind the Iron Curtain they had a radio programme that was just an extremely slow reading of the Bible in the Russian language.

Why is that, you might ask?

So that listeners, many of whom had no Bibles, could meticulously copy down each word and have their own Scriptures to keep. Without the Word of God, we will never reach the unreached.

5. The only way to fulfil the Great Commission is by working together

Have you ever asked yourself: What is the best way to show the world that we are Jesus' followers?

The answer is not by what we know, or by how often we go to church, or go on mission trips. The best way to witness to the world is by 'how we love one another.'

I am talking here about how we Christians love one another... how we build bridges not walls between denominations and different church groups.

Reaching the unreached is not a competition but a task that is carried out by all of us working together, praying together and supporting each other.

This is what the early church did. In Acts 2:42 we read that the early Christians "were like family to each other" (CEV). We need to learn from their example.

That's why Reach Beyond use the phrase 'Together. Voice + Hands'. We are committed to working together with indigenous churches, UK churches, other mission agencies; it's the best way we can share resources and talents in order to fulfil the Great Commission.

6. Reaching the unreached requires a generous heart

One of the reasons why the early church grew rapidly is because the believers were focused on the task of mission and they were generous towards people in need. In Acts 2:44–45 (NIV) we read: *"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."*

Think about this. These early believers sold their land and their homes, they made sacrifices. They gave generously to those who were in need amongst them.

In the letters to the Corinthians and the Philippians we read about their generosity towards the apostles and missionaries who travelled to take the gospel to other lands.

These early Christians had a sense of urgency. They knew that they would not fulfil the Great Commission in their spare time, using their spare cash.

The same is true for us today. Yet, as research from The Joshua Project shows today, our churches and mission agencies are investing less than 1% of all financial resources to the cause of reaching the unreached.

Reaching the unreached will never be easy or convenient. It will require sacrifices from you and from me - from all of us.

The question is: *are you ready and willing to give sacrificially to take the gospel to those who are living and dying without knowing Jesus?*

7. When we are willing to step outside of our comfort zone, God uses us to create ripple effects for eternity

Over the centuries of mission, God has used all kinds of disciples, churches and methods to reach the unreached. The only common denominator in all the mission stories is that God uses those people who are not afraid to trust God for the results of their work.

As Jesus said in Matthew 9:29, *“According to your faith let it be done to you”* (NIV). Here Jesus tells us that if we want to receive God’s blessings, we need to step out in faith and serve Him in our world.

Do you want to see God change the lives of the unreached? What lengths are you prepared to go to make sure that those who don’t know Jesus meet Him and become His followers?

Let me leave you with a story that hopefully will inspire and encourage you to play your part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Some time ago a Reach Beyond missionary from the UK called Alex helped to set up a brand-new Christian radio station in Togo. The station was broadcasting into unreached villages in north-western Togo, as well as southern Burkina Faso and north-east Ghana.

Unfortunately, powerful members of the community opposed the station and got the government to revoke its licence. A few months later the radio authority of Togo demanded £6,500 extra for reinstating the licence.

A Christian donor in the country agreed to fund half of this amount if the station could find the rest, so the call went out to ask UK supporters and prayer warriors to ask the Lord for a breakthrough.

That breakthrough didn’t take long! Within a couple of weeks, generous donors and churches in the UK stood in the gap and the target amount was reached. The Christian radio station in Togo is now back on the air with a new frequency, beaming programmes about Jesus to key unreached areas.

This is what Evarist, the manager of the radio station said: “We are trusting God to save many souls through our station. God is at work – I believe He will fulfil His plans for the station, and he is raising people up to make it a reality. God bless those who helped us, may His name be glorified!”

Every effort, every prayer, every donation counts in the task of reaching the unreached. God paves the way and He gives us wisdom and patience to overcome obstacles along the way if we are willing to step out into new mission frontiers with him.

Will you join Reach Beyond workers and mission partners in reaching the unreached this Pentecost?

We can share the gospel together and we can look forward to being part of the great multitude praising God in heaven, not just from the UK, but from every tribe and nation.

And, in the meantime let’s commit our lives to being the voice and hands of Jesus wherever He calls us to go.