

“Into All the World”

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Graphics: world, hard places, prayer

Big Truth: The last moments of Jesus’ earthly relationship with the disciples were in the Upper Room around a table, eating a meal together. Those last moments were Jesus’ opportunity to give the most important lessons he wanted them to know and follow. The people of the Panama UMC are called to sit with Jesus and learn the lessons he taught in order to be the disciples Jesus wants us to be. Jesus even came back to that Room after He rose from the grave. He had one more lesson. Yet, Jesus’ final appearance gave the disciples the culmination of the teaching. Go. Make Disciples. Baptize and teach in my name.

Focus Phrase: Through worship and with doubts, I am called to the hard places where Jesus wants to be.

1. Introduction

- A. I don’t know about you, but Stacy and I love to go to new places and see new things. We don’t often visit any place twice, unless there’s a good reason.
- B. We also don’t mind if it’s hard to get there, since sometimes, the harder it is to get to someplace, the better the reward at the end of the journey.
- C. For instance, we like to climb mountains because we know that when we get to the top, the view will be amazing! The harder it is to get there, the less people are there, and the better the experience.
- D. Because social media is such a part of our lives, we all can document our journeys, near and far, and then share those with the world.
- E. I read this week about a relatively new phenomenon related to this called *Place Hacking*. Have you heard of this?
 - i. Place hacking is a global movement of young urban explorers who sneak into places like former military bases, abandoned factories, decommissioned hospitals or power stations, sewer or subway tunnels and even skyscrapers still under construction. Of course, place hackers post everything online for the world to see.
 - a. Like this photo from Forth Rail Bridge, Scotland.
 - b. Or this one from from the sewers of London.
 - c. I would show you more, but as I was looking at some of the pictures of people standing or sitting on ledges 100 stories up, it made my stomach flip a little - and I’m not even afraid of heights.
 - ii. Armed with only a camera, place hackers reveal a whole new world that's rarely, if ever, seen by the general public. “The idea behind urban exploration is revealing what's hidden in the world,” says Dr. Bradley Garrett, an Oxford University academic and renowned place hacker. “It's

about going into places that are essentially off-limits and, because they are off limits, have been relatively forgotten. The goal of the urban explorer is not just to explore these places but also to photograph them and share these with others so they can see what they're like.”

- F. In not-so-many-words, these place hackers go **Into All the World** for a purpose, especially the hard places that others aren't willing to risk going.
- G. Now, I'm not suggesting that we all become place hackers, but what if we were willing to go Into All The World, especially the places that were hard to get to, to be, to seek out people who are forgotten, who feel unloved, or who need a fresh introduction to the Gospel?
- H. In our scripture for today from Matthew, Jesus gave the disciples three hard tasks to do after he was raised from the dead and ready to ascend back to heaven. And in order to DO these three hard things, the disciples would need to go to some hard places, to talk to some people that we might say are a risk to talk to.
- I. This message is called **Into All The World**...and we're going to Matthew 28:16-20...the final Commission - the GREAT Commission - that Jesus gave to the 11 remaining disciples.
- J. Jesus spent three years teaching the disciples what to do...and now, it was GO time...literally.
- K. Let's pray and then we can open our bibles to Matthew 28...
- L. **PRAY!**
- M. Matthew 28...Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning...appeared to people who became eye witnesses...and then, gave US this commission.
- N. If you're taking notes, write this down: *Through worship and with some doubts, I am called to the hard places where Jesus wants to be.*
- O. Let's read what Matthew records about what Jesus has to say...

2. Scripture

A. **READ Matthew 28:16-20**

- B. These words, recorded by Matthew, are the final words of Jesus in the book of Matthew. Which MEANS that they are critical to our understanding of Jesus' mission for the disciples.
- C. Jesus was raised from the dead...and appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and to the disciples in the Upper Room, and then, they saw him right before he ascended to heaven.
- D. Let's walk through this passage to find out more about what the disciples did and what Jesus was asking of them.

- E. First, the disciples were following orders to meet Jesus on this unnamed mountain in Galilee. In Matthew 28:8-10, we read these words (this was right after the resurrection on Easter morning), “So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” Which is exactly what happened...proving yet again that Jesus was the real deal.
- F. And, just like the women did when THEY saw Jesus, the disciples worshiped Jesus.
- G. But, Matthew wrote, *some doubted*. Now, we’re not sure WHAT they doubted. Maybe they doubted that it was really Jesus. Maybe they doubted that Jesus was real at all. Maybe they doubted what they were seeing. Maybe a combination of all that.
- H. But, think about this...maybe they were doubting that they could do what Jesus was about to tell them to do. In the midst of worship, while the disciples were expressing their faith in the Risen Lord, Matthew had a real sense of that feeling you get when you’re about to do a really hard task...or TASKS.
- I. The rollercoaster of emotion and understanding of the mission continued here on this mountain. Even though they loved Jesus and worshiped him, they also had doubts about what to do next.
- J. Jesus reminded them, again, that He had the authority (ALL authority) in heaven and on earth (which pretty much covers it, right?)...to give them this mission and to be the One to help them.
- K. And then, Jesus gave them three tasks. Write these down:
- i. #1 - **Go and make disciples of all nations** - go out, from this mountain, and go into all the world, to make disciples - to make followers of ME, Jesus said. Basically, replicate yourselves out there, so that the number of people who know about me, put their faith in me, and love me will increase. Not easy! That a hard place to go. And...
 - ii. #2 - **Baptize the people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**. Of course, baptism was not the first step in making new disciples; baptism only took place AFTER a person had been evangelized and was persuaded by the gospel message to embrace Christ as Savior and Lord. So what Jesus was telling the 11 to do was huge. He was telling them to share the gospel with strangers, to publicly identify themselves as followers of someone who had just been officially declared an outlaw and executed. They were to give personal witness to their faith (and we all know how hard that is!). Not an easy place to go. And...

- iii. #3 - **Teach these new converts EVERYTHING he had commanded them** - these 11 disciples - **to obey**. That, too, must have sounded like mission impossible. Even assuming a few of them had the gift of teaching, where was the curriculum? The gospels hadn't been written yet. The apostle Paul, whose letters would eventually become much of the New Testament, had yet to be converted. The church hadn't been formed yet, the doctrines hadn't even begun to be formulated and the creeds were still a couple hundred years or more in the future. What teaching materials there were included the Hebrew Bible - our Old Testament - and the disciples' memories of what Jesus had said and done while he was with them. I guess they should've been paying attention in class around that table last Thursday!
- iv. These were all hard things. They would take them into places they weren't sure they were equipped to go. No wonder some of the 11 doubted!
- v. Yet, Jesus did all the hard things first. He went to the places that were risky in order to show them how to go there...how to be there...and even show the disciples that no matter what happened, he was going to be with them.
- vi. Jesus left them with these famous words, "...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." There was now no doubt about what they were to do. AND, Jesus was going to be with them (and US) even through the worst of the worst, the riskiest of the riskiest, the places where people are not ready and the places of persecution and rejection.
- vii. And, this promise from Jesus also means that even when the world goes to complete hell, literally, Jesus would not only be WITH them, but would TRIUMPH...and there would be a new day when He returns.

3. Application

- A. Most of us probably aren't willing to be place hackers and go past No Trespassing signs into abandoned buildings or sewers or power stations in order to get some pictures of the inside of those places to post on social media.
- B. But that doesn't mean that you and I aren't called to become a different kind of place hacker for the sake of the Gospel and in Jesus' name. Church there are places in your life that need you to be the presence of Jesus, even though they may be hard to break into them.
- C. In fact, Jesus' commands us to "go ... and make disciples of all nations" (v. 19). Mark records in his gospel that Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel..."
- D. To do that, we might find ourselves hacking into places and into lives we might never have imagined, even when those places and people are as close as our own neighborhood...or even our own dining rooms.

- E. In that place, or in those places, you and I are called to do the very same three things that Jesus commissioned His first disciples to do. The Great Commission Jesus gave to the disciples is OUR commission.
- F. And we engage in that commission, EVEN THOUGH we have some doubts about our own abilities...about our time, gifts, courage, willingness, and fears.
- G. Jesus didn't save you, send you, and bless you because you're able to hack into places in your own strength, without doubts, and apart from worship. Jesus saved you, sends you out with blessings, so that He could LEAD you into those hard-to-go places for His glory...so the kingdom of God grows on earth for as long as you have left.
- H. You're called to be a disciples that makes disciples, to evangelize others into the church, and to teach new converts all about Jesus.
- I. And, news flash, you don't have what it takes...but you already knew that. Every one of us doubts that we can make the impact Jesus wants us to make. So often, that causes us to give up before we try. And YET, Jesus is leading you and you WILL hack into the places He leads if you let Him lead you.
- J. Remember: Through worship and with doubts, you are called to the hard places where Jesus wants to be.
- K. The Panama UMC Intentional Discipleship Process (or IDP) is our roadmap to make that happen in your life...and then equips you to go with Jesus to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, which is our mission. It's called SHIFT.
 - i. Our Shift IDP is the framework and pathway for every ministry team and each person to grow in a life of **worship**, a life of **community**, a life of **openness**, a life of **obeying**, a life of **sharing**, and a life of **servicing**.
 - ii. We're getting ready to publish that on our new website, so be looking for that, but to review:
 - a. Each follower of Jesus that's connected to Panama UMC is called to be growing from Exploring, to Following, to Becoming, to Centered in each of those 6 areas.
 - b. It's what we talk about in our ministry teams. It's what we strive for through sermons and bible studies. And it's what builds the foundation for you becoming a disciple that centered on Christ in worship, community, obeying, openness, serving, and sharing.
 - c. And as you're growing - as you're centering on Christ in those areas - you're sent out by Jesus and with Jesus. "Go (into all the world - especially the hard places) and make disciples of all nations."
- L. Talk about doubts! Can I even DO this? Do I even WANT to do this?

- i. Well, to answer the first question, “No. YOU can’t.” But, with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, you CAN and WILL - in even GREATER ways than the first disciples.
 - ii. The question about your desire is, “That depends.” Sometimes I find it hard to get motivated to do the hard things of ministry - sit at someone’s bedside, have hard conversations. Even harder still is sharing my faith with someone. We’re all there. Yet, it’s when I stop and think of one simple thing that my mind gets re-oriented. And that one simple thing is: Jesus died and walked out of his grave, and then told us - told me - to go in His name. If he died for me, I can live my life for Him...in the easy places and the hard places. I need to get over myself and show them Jesus.
- M. The easy places are the training ground for the hard places. Sharing our faith with our young children is easier than sharing it with our siblings. Sharing our faith and teaching a Sunday school class is easier than standing at the water cooler at work to tell someone that Jesus loves them.
- N. Jesus is calling you to hack into the hard places of the world - maybe it’s Haiti or the family down the street - in order for Him to go into those places with flesh on...with YOUR flesh on Him.
- O. Think about your own city or town. Where are those places that few respectable people would dare to go? Where are the dark alleys and hidden places that shelter people who hide in shame from the rest of the world? Where are the places of need, of opportunity?
- P. Would you place hack your neighbor’s front porch to invite him or her to coffee or over for dinner where you can begin a relationship that shows them the love of Christ?
- Q. Now that we’re coming out of this pandemic and the people in our lives are STARVED for relationship, I can envision reaching out to the local community to identify some places for us, as a church, to get out of these familiar walls into place hacking mode for Jesus!
- R. Bradley Garrett says that most people “age out” of place hacking buildings and cityscapes before the age of 40. They get respectable and lose the spark of adventure that caused them to get out and get dirty in the first place. The same could be said of Jesus’ followers. After 2,000 years of history, it’s become easy for the church to get complacent, to expect people to come to us, to prefer safety and the security of counting butts in pews and bucks in the offering plates. And then we count this as “following Jesus.”
- S. He’s right. But Jesus authorized US to “go,” not sit. He asked us to baptize believers, not build buildings. Few people in an increasingly secular culture are ever going try to place hack into our churches anyway. The only way forward

for the church is to go and get dirty, taking nothing with us but love, and leaving nothing but footprints.

- T. To boldly go where no one has gone before, to borrow a phrase from Star Trek.
- U. Through worship and with doubts, we (every one of us) are called to the hard places where Jesus wants to be.

4. Conclusion

- A. I pray this summer has you in places that inspire you. I'm just looking forward to traveling to see our kids and families. While there, I pray that Jesus pushes you into all the world, and uses your doubts to prove He's truly the Only One that matters...and that your life is worth every drop of blood He shed for you.
- B. He also shed it for your neighbor. Co-worker. Child. Friend. Sibling.
- C. So, pick one place this month, or this week, and make the commitment to go to that place with the love of Jesus as the only thing that's bolstering you. Hack into that place boldly and love fiercely like your life depends on it. Because the people you meet there? Their lives DO depend on it...depend on the Jesus in YOU meeting with them right where they are.
- D. And this is going to be hard. And we can't give up. And we can't chicken out.
- E. Go to the family room, the work room, the restaurant, the rough part of town, the in-law's house, the homeless shelter...start inside of yourself.
- F. Jesus will be with you...in fact, he'll lead, and you can follow. Be intentional. And I would LOVE it if you report back to me or someone to give an account of how it went.
- G. Go...Into ALL the World.
- H. Let's Pray...Pray!