

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

October 28, 2018

SPEAKER

Dave Owen

SERIES

Follow Me

PART

8

TITLE

I Will Make You Fruitful

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:16-20



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Good morning to you, Providence. I hope you are well this morning. My name's Dave, one of the pastors. I have the joy of teaching you at this hour. And so if you are a guest with us, we say good morning as well. If you're joining this livestream, we say good morning as well. Hope you have had a good week and are recovering from the fair food and are healthy this morning. I don't know what they were thinking with frying Oreos. No idea. No idea. Leave Oreos alone. They're fine. Why'd you have to go and fry them? Why do you do that?

So here's what we're doing. We are finishing up our Follow Me series and looking at Matthew 28. So if you have your Bibles, you can go ahead and turn there. If you don't have one, there are some underneath the chair, and the page number for that will be 835, so 835. If you're not a Christian and you're here with us this morning, we're so grateful that you're here and glad that you have joined us. If you're observing Christianity, maybe livestream, and looking into these things, we're grateful that you've joined us as well.

We are looking at the idea this morning of really multiplying our life to follow Jesus as followers of Jesus. As we follow him, we believe he will multiply our lives in the sense of not only being fruitful and bearing the Fruit of the Spirit of God, but also the idea of bearing fruit and seeing other people come to Christ. Being used, you and I, to see others come to faith in Christ. Right now we're in a vision in our church where we desire to plant the gospel in our lives in our church, to plant the gospel in our city, and then to see churches planted in the world, and we're praying and asking God that a thousand of you would literally see someone come to Christ through you sharing the gospel with them. And yet for the church in the west, we don't see this happening.

Those who claim to be followers of Christ, one study shows that only some 20% of those who say they're a Christian that they're following Christ, have led someone to Christ. And of that 20%, they believe that they should even share maybe once a month. Only 20% would share once a month, even have a spiritual conversation with someone. And that beckons the question, why is that? When some of the last words of Christ in all four of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and even in the book of Acts, his last words, his last words weren't "Sign up for another Bible study." I mean, he just says, "I've been sent, so I'm sending you. Pray. Wait on the Spirit of God to come, and I'm going to make you not effectual Bible study participants, but I'm gonna make you witnesses. You're gonna bear witness of me."

One author, I believe, is on to something. Just a few years ago he wrote a book. This pastor, theologian, author called ... his name is Kyle Idleman. He wrote a book called Not a Fan, becoming a completely committed follower of Jesus. Listen to what he says. "The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren't actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them." So the question this morning, are we a fan of Christ, or are we a follower of Christ?

When you think about Carter Finley Stadium and that incredible setting where all the red and white come out, and you see these fans, they're screaming, they paint their face, they tailgate, they Bojangles, they're out there. They're in it. They live for this moment. They live for this moment. And they're out there, but then when the game's over, they go back to life. They never participate in the game. They're fans. They never participate in the game at all. And I think for many in the west, the church has become sort of a stadium where you cheer for Jesus from a distance, but you never participate in the mission of God, to share the love of God.

And listen, this morning, this morning, this is not a message to guilt you into sharing, to motivate you to the parking lot. By the time you get to first watch and have a pancake, you forget. No, I wanna grace you into seeing the greatness of God, the glory of God, the majesty of God, the mercy of God. I believe this text could actually move us as a church, as a people, from the threat of being a fan when it comes to making disciples to the thrill of being a follower and leveraging our life to make disciples. And so with that said, let me pray and then we'll read this great word.

Father, thank you for this morning. Thank you for this opportunity to open the book and read it and allow it to read us, God, in a sense. And I pray, Father, that you would just speak through your Word, use your Word this morning, we pray. We pray you would make much of your Son Christ. I pray it in Jesus' name, amen.

So Matthew 28, here we go. Matthew 28:16 to the end. Let's read this. "Now the 11 disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

So this morning I wanna show you three quick truths as we celebrate what God's doing and finishing up this series called Follow Me. Three quick truths of what it looks like to not be threatened, to be a fan, but to the thrill of being a follower. So number one is this: it's to rest in the power given to Jesus. Rest in the power given to Jesus. Notice that in verse 16, 17, and 18. The disciples, they went to Galilee, to the mountain where he had directed them. And they saw him and they worshiped and he came and said some doubted even in that moment, because he had been crucified but now he's alive. And he says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." So Providence Church family, listen this morning, rest in the power given to him. Notice the text. The text says, how much authority does he have? Some authority? No, the text says that he has all authority, every bit of it.

And where is this authority? Is this authority just in the church? Is this authority just in the heavens? No, the Bible says that all authority has been given to him in heaven and earth. He is the supreme ruler of the universe. He is the sovereign king over all kings. Listen, from wind to waves to the waters of the oceans, he rules all things. That's why the text in most of the psalms would say, "Magnify the Lord with me," the idea to magnify God, the Lord Jesus, is not to make him big. It's not in the magnification of making him big; it's to see him big and how great he is. This is why texts like Colossians 1 means the world to me over the years. It says, "For by him all things were created." This is Jesus speaking as Paul is writing to a church in Colossae.

He says, "All things were created through him and for him and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." And Hebrews 1, the writer there says this: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he, Jesus, he upholds the universe by the word of his power." This is the type of authority that's been given to the Son of God, who we call King and Savior. By his word he holds up the universe. That's amazing. Let that land on you this morning. Don't become familiar with that. Don't become accustomed to hearing that week in and week out and not let it affect your soul.

John Piper, theologian and pastor, has influenced my heart, my mind, how I think about Christ. Writes this in a small book, profound book called Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ. He says this. He says, "The composition of all things was not only created by Christ, but it is also held in being moment by moment throughout the whole universe by his will. Jesus Christ defines reality in the beginning and gives it form every second."

What? He alone is worthy. He alone is worthy of our trust. He shows us the Father. He gives us wisdom. He makes all things work together for good. Not one of his judgments about anything is ever mistaken. Not one. He never gets anything wrong. So you can trust him and admire him and follow him. Listen, to think, who has the power in his voice to calm the waters, to silence the wind, to summon dead people to come to life?

Think about that. He's in a boat with his disciples. Waves are crashing and he speaks. He speaks to the wind and it stops. Water. Water, he speaks to the water and it hardens under his feet. Then he leans into a grave and he says, "Lazarus, come out." Who speaks to dead people, and they start breathing.

Some theologians say he said, "Lazarus, come out." Called him by name. Because if he had just said "come out," all the dead would have rose. Listen. Listen. It's eight o'clock. It's early. I know. Listen. Listen, I can't get my dog to listen to me with a bone in my hand, and he's speaking to dead people and they're rising. Let me tell you this. Luke 12, this is a massive text that shows the supreme authority of God in Christ. He says this: He says, "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him."

He has all authority. Heaven and earth and hell. Listen, watch this. I'm setting this up for you this morning. Listen. If there is a comfort and a confidence that rises when you rest in the power found in Christ. There's a safety and a security, now watch this, found in Christ that doesn't paralyze you and cause you to retreat from the mission. It propels you forward to run to the mission. Did you hear what he said in Luke? He says, "Don't be afraid when they kill you." What?

In the west, the majorities of our brothers and sisters in Christ, the majority of those who follow Christ in the world, that text means a lot of different things to them than to us, because they're on the run, for many of them. They're under constant threat of being martyred for their faith. And when a text like that grips you, it doesn't cause you to be paralyzed and to retreat, but it allows you to run, and the context of him saying this in chapter 21 verse one, all the way to verse 16, the context is the resurrection. He has come back from the dead. Listen, he doesn't just raise people from the dead; he rose from the dead, and it's in that context that he says, "All authority." It doesn't look like the Son of God has authority on Friday afternoon of that week. It doesn't look like he has authority. It's mind-blowing.

What has happened? They have killed the Son of God, the one who has done miracles. They say, "If you've done all these other things, save yourself," they said. And yet he knew that what looked like defeat was actually victory. And then he goes into the grave and he comes out on the third day and it's in light of the resurrection that he says these things, all authority. And listen. Listen. When you are gripped with this reality and you begin to rest in the power that's in Christ and Christ in you, listen. You won't have to sign up for training on how to share Christ. Oh, there's some helps out there.

I'm gonna give you one in just a minute. There's some helps. But when you get gripped by this reality of who the Son of God is, you won't have to have training to talk about him. It'll flow. Matter of fact, you won't stop talking about him and sharing him. This is why we sing. Did you hear what we just sung, In Christ Alone? No guilt in life, no fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand. Till he returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I stand. Listen, this morning, let's trust Jesus is strong enough to speak through our weakness.

Let's trust that he's strong enough to speak through our weakness. And if you're a nonbeliever this morning, again, we're so grateful that you are here this morning. But trust Jesus. Trust Jesus is strong enough to save you from your sin. Trust him. Place your faith in him. The second truth this morning is this: is to realize the plan. Realize the plan given by Jesus. It's not complicated. We make it complicated, but it's not complicated. It's clearly laid out, and I wanna show you the ordering of the text when Jesus says, when he says, "All authority has been given to me." Then in verse 19 he says, "Go therefore," or therefore go. So the word "therefore" in the text always points our eyes back to what was just said.

So what I believe he's saying is in light of, in light of that Jesus has all authority, so in light of that truth, in light of that indicative, so now go and make disciples. He doesn't just start off trying to move us to go make disciples; he's reminding us first who he is, the one that we're representing. The one that we're speaking about. The one that we're sharing. All authority has been given, so now in light of that, let's go. And a lot of times people will come to this text in verse 19 and they'll shout the word "go" and that's gonna motivate us to some degree. And the word "go" is a participle. It's "as you're going." As you're going. The three participles are going, baptizing, and teaching. The only imperative, the only command in the text, is to make disciples. So as you're going, he says, make disciples, baptizing them.

Which, this morning, Providence, we have the joy of baptizing like eight people this morning. One in just a few minutes, a few at the other two services. Teaching is growing in God. And so let's break down for just a moment the idea of make disciples. What does this mean? Well the language in which Providence, your leadership team and elders and pastors have rallied and prayed over the years, it simply sounds like this. We wanna introduce all people to Jesus and grow them up to love and worship him. If you go on our website, you look at what we believe, you look at our mission statement purpose, this is what you read. And where does that derive from? It comes from two words in our text this morning. Make disciples. The idea of making disciples is to introduce all people to Jesus and then grow them up to love and worship him. And to introduce, and I wanna break those two down. So when you think about introduce all people, we would call that evangelism.

It's a scary word. It's a big word. We don't use it a lot. It simply means sharing Jesus. It means telling people about Jesus, encouraging people who he is. Introducing them to Christ and who he is and what he's done. And then the second part of our mission statement, to grow them up to love and worship him, that idea there is discipleship. Where discipleship, not you make disciples, you introduce them to Christ and then there's discipleship, where you're walking together, you're doing life together, you're opening the Word together, you're praying together, and you're walking through these things. And you have seen this over the years, but I wanna just remind us this morning and show it to us one more time. We use a tool. Many people have been trained. They have different tools they use because they could be intimidated. Sometimes when you have a tool that you can transition to when you're taking an everyday conversation. And an everyday conversation, right now it's generally bad news all the time.

And so a great way to transition to good news is just to say, "Look man, there's been a lot of bad news in the news, but there is some good news out there. Would you mind if I share that with you?" "No, I don't wanna hear it." "All right, thanks. Have a good day." That wasn't too hard. Or they might say, "Sure, I'd love to hear it." And so what we do, we use this tool called Three Circles, and I'll just sort of walk you through it one more time. It just starts ... and you can write this. There's an app for it. It's simple to use, but it just starts with God's design. And you just encourage folks with the idea that he designed us. He made us. He created us. He's designed. The watch didn't just appear; someone created that thing to work and to function.

And his name is God and he made us. And yet there's a problem that comes, and the idea of it is sin. You might have to unpack that word a little bit. It literally means "to miss the mark," and so all of us have missed the mark of living up to God's original design. That's what that means.

We've missed the mark. And it leads to some craziness that we just use this third word called brokenness. And my heart, my life, your life, everybody's life got some brokenness to it. It's fragmented. It's everywhere. And what happens is, and you'll see these little lines coming out of the word "brokenness." Each of those lines that are very crooked, what they remind us is that we actually try to fix our brokenness. We try all kinds of things. We think if it's the right relationship, then man, that's gonna be awesome. We think, if I had this amount of money, that'll fix that emptiness, that brokenness in my heart. If I have this material thing, the list just goes on and on and on. And all that happens. It comes in, it sits in your heart for maybe a day. It could stay there for about a year. It could stay there for a week.

And it feels like it's filling you up, but it's gonna be empty. It is. One theologian said, "The heart is restless until it finds its rest in Christ." Others say that there's a God-shaped vacuum in your heart that only God can fill. So don't waste your time trying to fill it with all these things that will leave you empty. And so as you're walking through, maybe it's coffee, maybe it's lunch, maybe it's on a napkin, this brokenness. But there is an opportunity. There's this word called "gospel." And this word, it literally means good news. That's what it means. Sometimes when we hear ... actually at the beginning, if you notice your Bible, the next book of the Bible from Matthew 28 is Mark. And if you just look at Mark, at the beginning of Mark it probably says, in your Bible, it says "the gospel according to Mark." So the first four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament, each start with that. "The gospel according to." So what that means is, it means the good news. It means the good news according to the eyewitnesses who saw Jesus, heard about Jesus, wrote about Jesus.

That's what that means. Sometimes you say, "What is the gospel?" It's Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. No, no, no. The gospel is good news about Jesus and then these four guys wrote about them from a different lens, a different perspective. And so if we're able to really repent and believe the idea of a change of mind, the turning our mindset, don't try ... let's make sure we don't define repentance. Look, get right with God and then come to God. No, you come to God and he gets you right. Let's not mix that up. But we can't fix ourself. Only God can. And so when you put ... you change your mind in the sense of turning to him and allowing him and believing on him, believing on Christ, and you're actually able to recover and pursue God's design and live even in a broken world with peace and joy.

It's still gonna be hard, but there's a sweetness to it when you do that. Now, I just walked you through how to share the gospel. Maybe you're here and you're not a believer. We wanna encourage you to consider Christ and trust him. Or maybe you are and maybe you've never, ever shared that with anybody. I wanna encourage you to try maybe even this week to share the gospel with someone and walk through that.

You'd be amazed. And again, they may reject you. They may ask, "Hey, I've got some more questions." But listen. My heart was so encouraged. Just a few weeks ago I was having lunch with a brother who's an older mentor. He's 84 years old. He's been married 61 years. And as we sat down, he goes, "Brother Dave," he goes, "listen. You know I'm heading to Brown Wind Funeral Home pretty soon."

That's how he starts the conversation. "Now you know I'm gonna probably beat you there." And he goes, "But I tell you what I wanna do." He goes, "I wanna lead as many people to Jesus before I get to that funeral home." And he says, "You know what I did yesterday?" And I'm like, "No, but what'd you do?" He said, "My sweet wife of 61 years and I were on our kitchen, and we practice rehearsing the three circles with each other so we could lead people to Jesus." I was like, "You've been a believer like 50 years. You practice?" Yeah. Yeah, I practice. Man, I've got some opportunities this week to meet with some friends, and I'm gonna share the gospel with them.

Listen, don't wait until you're closer to a funeral home to have a sense of urgency to share the gospel. So listen, listen. The idea of introduction, people introducing people to Jesus, is evangelism, but the idea of growing them up to love and worship him is discipleship, and we've got a tool for you, a simple tool, that we want to encourage you to use. It's called Growing in God. It's a devotion book. Brian mentioned it weeks ago, but it just walks through really an incredible ... it's nothing ... there's much more, yes, to walking with God, but it's nothing less. It basically walks through five ... it's a devotion book. It walks through these five things to rehearse the gospel so you wanna make sure people are understanding what the gospel is, that it does save you from your sin, but also sustains you in your journey. To be able to read the Bible. You can't assume these things. You have to show them how to read the Bible. Some folks I meet with and talk with, it's awesome because they're looking in the Bible and they're like, "What are the big numbers for? What are the small numbers for?"

If a blind person walked down the mall with their stick and they tripped and fell, we wouldn't make fun of them. We'd go help them. We would run to them. In our culture, there's many that are spiritually blind, that are tripping every day. And so to be able to run and help them understand, read the Bible, to rely on prayer, teach them how to pray, pray with them, show them how to pray, to run in community. This is a local church. This is the idea of what does it look like to be a part of a body that celebrates the Lord's Supper and baptism and walk through that together. And then to recite your story. You wanna teach a ... for a new believer in Christ, the expectation is we want you to ... who do you know in your life that would love to hear this good news in a broken world?

And encourage them to share the gospel with them. See listen, we believe at Providence that the light that shines the brightest at home shines the farthest away, so we wanna be about reaching neighbors and coworkers and encouraging them with this good news. We also wanna be about partnering with people who are doing it overseas.

This summer I had an opportunity to be in the Czech Republic, and it was an amazing time where this brother over there has been plowing for seven years. Just loving on people, sharing the gospel, and seen no one coming to faith in Christ. As part of our basketball camp that we do over there, students started coming to Christ. About three or four weeks ago he sent me these pictures. I wanna show you real quick. The first one is this of him baptizing. This is a pool. This is my buddy Vladia, and Vladia, it's funny because there's an outside and a pool in the backyard. It's pretty cold, but this was the first time they've had a baptism in their church in seven years.

And the week before Vladia came, he came over to this house and he brought his brother-in-law, who is a church planter with him, they were planting the church together in this area. And he had never baptized anybody, so he practiced with his brother in law, baptized his brother in law so he wouldn't drop somebody and mess it up. They had about 40 nonbelievers come to the baptism to watch and celebrate. There's a sweetness to the aroma of Christ, is it not? So listen, let me ask you this question real quick. Who is one person you know that you would love to introduce them to Jesus? [inaudible] We wanna reach the city, we wanna reach the world, but look, it's one person at a time. Just to befriend them and genuinely care for them and love them and have an authentic relationship with them and invite them to your table at your house and just walk with them. And then share the gospel with them.

The third truth is this, is to rely on the promise given from Jesus. And we'll close with this. To rely on the promise given from Jesus. Notice the text. There are these indicatives of all the authority's been given to him. That propels us. That sets us up to go make disciples in where? All nations. It says make disciples of all nations, so it starts with neighborhoods, but it goes to the nations where Brian and Phil and some others have just returned. Baptizing them and teaching them all to observe. So the whole counsel of God's Word, we wanna teach. And then he closes this incredible commission that he's given to this people. He says, "Behold." That means to take hold all to this statement. "I am with you." He's not sending us anywhere he's not willing to go. He's not going to send us out and stay home in a sense. He's going to be with us by his Spirit to the end of the age.

And so take comfort this morning that God, not only does he love us and he sent his Son to save us, but he's with us when he sends us. Look, when the storm winds hit the house and your two-year-old jumps in the bed with you, the storm doesn't go away. There's strength found in the one that the child is with, to endure the storm. And there's promises by God that he gives that allows us to endure the storms. Like Hebrews 13, he says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Look, weekly, if you feel abandoned in a sense and it's hard to make disciples, listen. Pray. Pray. God, I believe that you will never leave me nor forsake me.

Take hold of that promise from God. Take hold of the promise from Isaiah 26 that says, "He whose mind is stayed on God, he will keep him in perfect peace. Trust in the Lord, for he is an everlasting rock." Take hold of the promises that he has given us in Christ, that Jesus says in Matthew 16, he says, "I will build my church." Jesus says these words, and he says, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Lean into these promises. Lean into these promises. When we think about the gates of hell not prevailing, often times we think if this was like a city, this stand, and there was a box around it that went all the way around it, and that box, let us just imagine, was a gate, was a fortified gate, the way we view Christianity oftentimes in the west is we view Christianity as this club that we're inside, so the stand would be the club that we all have to get together and build a gate so the outside forces of the world and the evil one, the devil, and the demonic realm, hell itself, wouldn't come in and knock that down and get to us.

That's the way we envision sometimes. And I think what the text is saying is just the opposite. I think what the text is saying is that, look, there's a gate that is around cities in the world. There's a gate that is around the hearts of men and women in the world. And there's a gate that the enemy has blinded cities and nations, and there's a gate that the enemy has put up and they're going to die and spend eternity in hell unless the gospel reaches them. And the gospel, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

As the gospel advances and moves, those gates around those cities and those gates around the hearts of those who don't know him, those are not going to prevail against the preaching and the sharing of the gospel of Christ. Those gates, Jesus promises, they're coming down. In love, in grace, in joy. They're coming ... but they're not going to prevail. This is why, this is why we go, because there's promises that you can rely on, and they'll hold you as he holds you. And so this morning, let's pray the promises of God until they propel you to go share the gospel of God. Let's pray this morning.

Father, thank you so much. Thank you so much, God, for your grace, for your mercy, for your kindness that you have shown us. God, thank you for the opportunity to walk through this series called Follow Me. The sayings of Christ have been absolutely profound, and yet so encouraging. So God, would you help us to not be marked as a people who are simply fans who never participate in the mission of God, but would be followers who are propelled and run to the mission that you've given us, to introduce people, to die along with them, to converse with them, to encourage conversations toward Christ and his love, his grace, and his mercy. God, accomplish these things, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.



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