

## Wesley United Methodist Church

October 18, 2015

“Who, Me?”

Matthew 28:16-20

This morning I'm going to use a word that some people say shouldn't be used in mixed company. Some say it should NEVER be used from the pulpit because it will run off any visitors you have. And still it is so repulsive a word that it should never be said at all. I'm going out on a limb this morning and use that word. I hope you'll forgive me if that offended you but that's what I think our passage is all about.

Read Scripture: Matthew 28:16-17.

I think you can see why I think this passage is about the “E” word. There is that little imperative word: “Go” and then all of those words like, make, baptize, teach, obey, that follow that sort of make it like military marching orders. “Go” is such a simple word with a simple meaning. “Don't just stand there, do something?” We use it to start races, “On your mark, set, Go.” There is not a racer anywhere who hearing those words and the starting pistol says: “Who, Me?”

This morning I want to deal with the Who, Where, How, and Why of the “E” word. The Who, Where, How, and Why of the command to Go and make Disciples.

The first is Who. Unfortunately, most of us act like the out-of-shape, overweight man who decided to take up tennis. He took lessons from a pro. He read several self-help books which advised him to “think positively” and ‘develop a winning attitude.’

A friend asked him how his tennis was going. With a positive, winning attitude in his voice, the man replied, “When my opponent hits the ball at me, my brain immediately barks out a command to my body: ‘Race up to the net.’ Then it says, ‘Slam a blistering shot to a far corner of the court. Then immediately jump back in position and return the next volley to the other far corner of the court.’ And then my body says, “Who, me?”

I'd be willing to bet, if we could go back in time, that the first words out of the mouths of all the disciples after Jesus spoke these words were the same: “Who, me?” You have to remember that the same events of this passage actually took place before Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But the question is still pertinent, “Who, me?”

And the answer, of course, is, “Yes, you.” Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20 says: “We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.”

“Who, me?” “Yes, you!”

You because you are much better at it than I. You see, it's because it's part of my job. Most people expect me and every other minister in the world to witness and do the “E” word thingy. You're sort of like secret agents. Most folks don't expect you to talk about your faith or be involved in this whole Evangelism deal. We call it Outreach because we don't like the “E” word either. But you know what, you are exactly who Jesus would have chosen. Jesus called fishermen, tax collectors, and every day ordinary kinds of people. He didn't have a single Pharisee, Sadducee, Priest, or Levite on his staff. It was all run by the Laity. And after Pentecost their ministry exploded.

That leads us to the next question: “Where.” Well, the operative word in the passage is “Go” remember. If we don't “Go” somewhere we'll wind up getting nowhere.

Did you know all the research people who join the church say that 75 – 80% of them were brought into the church by their friends and personal acquaintances. Only 9% were brought by pastors and only 2% by Sunday School teachers.

I don't want to make light of my Seminary degree, I know how hard I worked to get them. But the power of the Laity, the power of friends and friendships is much more valuable than any number of degrees that I could have.

When Jesus said: “Go into all the world” he was calling each of you to be a missionary as well as an ambassador. Some of you may answer the call to be an overseas missionary. For most, the call to be a missionary is a call into the mission field of your world. The world or people you know and like and who know you and like you. The world of your family. The world of your friends. “GO!”

Then there's the “How?” Have you seen the Staples office supply commercials with the Easy Button? Don't you wish we had one of those when it came to Evangelism? Knock on someone's door and push the easy button. In a

sense, we do. Because the How?" is really pretty simple. The first thing we do is trust the Spirit of the Risen Christ. And trust the Holy Spirit. And trust the miracle of God who works in our lives in such a way that our lives are transformed into an invitation to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

You see, we can't force or make anyone be a disciples of Jesus. But we CAN pray for them. And in that prayer we can ask God to enter their lives in such a way that Jesus becomes real and their relationship with God grows deep. And then ask God for the right words and the power of God's Spirit to speak them when the opportunity arises.

We can engage in conversation about their faith and their relationship with God in a non condemning manner. We can encourage. We can invite. We can offer counsel. But we leave the hard work, the heart work, up to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. You see, we are not on some spiritual mugging mission. The "How" is simple. Pray. Listen. Love. Live your faith. And be ready to "Go when the start signal comes. Be ready to tell others in your world of influence "Why" it is important to you.

And that brings me to the final question: "Why?" William Temple once said: "The church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members."

Now the obvious question to the "Why?" question is simple: "Because Jesus said so." I don't find that very compelling. Probably even less compelling than when we tell our kids "Because I said so." Yes, I know, there is that whole obedience thing. We can't overlook that. But the most compelling reason is because of what Jesus has done in our lives.

We want others to know and experience the love of God which we've experienced. We want others experience the same forgiveness and new life we've experienced through Christ's death and resurrection, that we have.

Most of us don't like the word Evangelism, but that is our primary mission. That's what Jesus meant when he said: "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. And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We have to "Go." That's part of being a disciple. But we're called to remember that we don't go alone. God is with us. Christ is with us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we need to remember that we don't have a communicable disease, we have a communicable cure for sin, loneliness, low self esteem, lack of purpose, lack of direction and guilt. And what we want to do is infect everyone we meet.

So, be upset with me if you want to be about my use of the "E" word. But Evangelism is our purpose. You can get all over me for saying that word, I don't care, as long as you "GO" and "DO" what Jesus said. And not ask the silly question, "Who, Me?"