

## **THE MATTHEW MANDATE**

**By Dr. Steve Daily**

The story is told of a pastor (a pastor that I know well), who decided to be a “Good Samaritan” to his next door neighbor, who found that one of her recently born kittens was stranded out on a branch in the big tree in their front yard. The branch was too long to climb out on, and too high to reach with a ladder, so the pastor got an old rope out of his trunk, threw it over the branch, secured it through a loop and tied the other end to his trailer hitch on the car. Then he slowly pulled the car down the drive way until the end of the branch was almost low enough for them to reach the kitten. But, just before the branch was bent enough to facilitate the rescue, the old rope broke and the kitten was launched into space by the returning branch as if it had been shot out of a canon. They looked everywhere, but were unable to find the kitten anywhere. Two days later the pastor ran into another neighbor who lived behind him, who happened to be one of his church members, buying cat food in the grocery store. Knowing that she hated cats, and wouldn’t allow them on her property, he teasingly asked her about her purchase.

She shook her head, and said, “You won’t believe this pastor, but we had a miracle at our house the other day. My son who has been wanting a pet, was offered a free kitten, and came begging to me to allow him to have it. I told him, you know I can’t stand cats, so the only way I will allow a cat is if you pray to God for one and He literally drops it out of heaven. My son looked heart broken, but I watched him walk into the back yard, kneel in front of the pile of freshly mowed lawn and start praying to God. Like I say, you won’t believe this pastor, but before he finished his prayer, I saw this kitten come flying straight down out of the heavens with paws outstretched and land directly on that pile of grass. Do you believe that crazy story pastor, it sure increased my faith.” The pastor, trying to keep from splitting a gut, said, “Every word of it sister, I believe every word of it.”

Miracles and being a “Good Samaritan,” often go hand in hand. As I said in my last sermon, the miracles of Jesus were triggered by his tremendous love and compassion for people. Jesus had compassion on the demoniacs and then he healed them (Mark 5:19), He tells them, “When you testify about what I’ve done, don’t just tell people about the miracles, but tell them how they were triggered by My compassion and love. It took a caring boy who was willing to give up his own lunch, to release the miracle of the feeding of

the five thousand. Some of you have heard me tell the story about Smith Wigglesworth who was being driven by a layman to a speaking appointment when the layperson's car that had no working gas gauge ran out of fuel. The driver was devastated thinking about the waiting crowd that would miss their one and only chance to hear the great Wigglesworth. Smith's heart was filled with compassion for the man and the crowd, so he prayed, and then asked the driver if he had a container of water in the trunk. When the man said, "Yes," Wigglesworth told him to pour it in the gas tank. Despite knowing that this could ruin his car, the man obeyed the giant of faith, and the two of them drove safely to their destination. The miracle was triggered by love and compassion.

Today, we look at the ninth fruit on our kingdom tree which has to do with the Matthew Mandate given by Jesus. It is found over in Matthew 25:40 and it is a very familiar text to us all. Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers; so you did it unto me." Did what? Witnessed to me and converted me to your faith? Invited me to church? Taught and preached the principles of the kingdom? No! The answer is, fed me, clothed me, provided me with shelter and visited me in prison. For the past five years I have been functioning as a senior pastor with the primary roles of preaching, teaching and counseling people. I enjoy this work and find it fulfilling, but there is a part of me that really misses being directly involved with following the Matthew Mandate. Before I came to Celebration, I was the director of our KEYS program in Orange County that provided shelter for victims of domestic violence. I also was in charge of a soupkitchen that provided two meals for 80 to 100 people everyday for seven years, and was directly involved with prison ministries for two decades, all of which could get messy. But that is part of what made these ministries rewarding. I want to make three points this morning.

**1. The Matthew Mandate will be among the top priorities of every true church.** The New Testament Church was way ahead of the western church in this regard. In Acts 2:44-45, we read, "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." James went so far as to say that true faith, or pure and undefiled religion, was to care for the widows and the orphans (James 1:27). Yet, most churches in the western world today do very little for the poor and needy. Church budgets are typically consumed by salaries and building costs. But, I believe that God is about to change all that, the terrible economy has humbled us all and forced

us to see our extreme dependence on God. Now I believe He is about to release a revival in this nation that will dwarf every other move of God this country has ever seen. He is about to release a spiritual tsunami that will not only blow our minds, by the people that it reaches, but will blow our minds in terms of the abundance it releases as well.

I have received more mind blowing prophetic words in the last few weeks than in all my previous years as a senior pastor. Some have been confirmed and some haven't, but the sheer volume of what I've received tells me that we are about to be launched into a move of God that is unprecedented and beyond our imaginations. That doesn't necessarily mean we will become a big church, although some of the words definitely indicate that, but I can see that God is going to use us in a powerful way whether we are big or small, as long as we keep hungering for Him and making His priorities our priorities. For far too long the church has thought and operated out of a box that is way too small. The devil has kept churches distracted by divisive power struggles, petty bickering, and majoring on minors. When I was a university chaplain I was amazed by the trivial issues that would consume our entire campus, such things as, required worships, whether caffeine could be served on campus, or whether students could wear shorts to class. This last controversy became so pronounced that it led to me having a prophetic dream, that you might enjoy, let me share it with you.

**This was recorded in my book *Adventism for a New Generation* (p. 21). My concern was addressed that night in a dream. I saw the colleges and universities of Southern California gathered together for a great student congress on the floor of the L.A. Coliseum. Each school was instructed to single out the one issue that was attracting the greatest attention on its campus. It was impressive to see the students of UCR erect a huge banner which read, "Free South Africa-Down With Apartheid." UCLA raised a similar sign with the words, "Stop World Hunger." UC Irvine was concerned about overpopulation and pollution. The Calremont Colleges chose as their slogan, "End Racist Nationalism – Join the Sanctuary Movement." Fuller Theological Seminary raised the issue of sexism, expressing its support for women's ordination, and USC proudly proclaimed its commitment to fighting terrorism and the threat of nuclear war.**

**Then all eyes seemed to focus on La Sierra University as it elevated a gigantic banner that clearly contained the most perplexing message of the day. It was a very simple looking sign, inscribed with the word SHORTS. There was a moment of profound silence and then a pervasive buzz could be heard throughout the crowd. Most of the students seemed embarrassed that they were not familiar with what these letters stood for, assuming that SHORTS must be an acronym for something. A tremendous debate ensued as the various schools attempted to decode its**

meaning. One coed from USC suggested that the letters stood for, “the Shortage of Housing and Opposition to Rising Tuition by Students.” But this idea was quickly dismissed by others as far too parochial and insignificant in its global implications to occupy the attention of an entire campus.

Suddenly, a UCR student shouted, “I’ve got it! I’ve got it! La Sierra has managed to include all of the major issues facing our world today in a single acronym. How could we be so blind? SHORTS obviously stands for South Africa, Hunger, Overpopulation, Racism, Terrorism, and Sexism.” A murmur of approval quickly moved throughout the crowd and resulted in thunderous applause and energetic shouts of jubilant affirmation. The roar became so deafening that it woke me from my sleep, and a still small voice whispered, “Why are the children of this world wiser in their generation than the children of light?”

What is hard to find is Christians who have both their vertical and horizontal priorities in place. That is why I have been so impressed with Heidi and Roland Baker’s Iris Ministries, and was so thrilled when my son went to Mozambique to serve as a missionary with them. What he shared last week about the chambers of the Father’s heart is what he lived and saw modeled by Heidi and Roland in Mozambique. Heidi grew up in a well to do home in Laguna Beach, but like Mother Teresa, she felt called by God to the poorest of the poor.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Mother Teresa,<sup>2</sup> however, she didn’t question her relationship with God, but gave herself fully to Him. In all her business, taking care of thousands of orphans, the Lord said to her, “Give me your mornings and I will give you the nations.” Since that time her ministry is not only feeding tens of thousands of needy people a day, but has established more than 6,000 churches in Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa and India, with more than a thousand new people receiving Christ a day accompanied by constant miracles.

To be part of their ministry, you not only see miracles on a regular basis, but you become a miracle yourself. For example, one of their staff that you will probably never read about, but who was one of Justin’s favorites, was their accountant named Gordon Haggerty. This guy was just a quiet faithful worker who was hidden in Christ, but he would do whatever he was called to do. In one case, he needed to go and preach in a distant village because no one else was available. When he was using the outhouse before the sermon, it caved in and he sank over his head into the latrine. Covered with fesses, maggots, and every other kind of sewage filth, and without a change of clothes, he simply pulled himself out of the latrine, preached his sermon covered with filth, and saw many converted to the Lord. On another occasion, when a nearby artillery storage area exploded, send live missiles

into the Iris headquarters, Gordon blew everyone's mind by openly dancing, praising God, and rebuking the enemy in the middle of their compound. Not a single soul in the Iris camp was injured. God is looking for this kind of radical, crazy faith that is most readily released when we abandon ourselves to helping others.

**2. To the degree that we fail to faithfully follow the Matthew Mandate we rob ourselves of blessing, individually and corporately.** I have a pastor friend who made this point several years ago when he was a youth pastor. The week before he was scheduled to preach in the big church, he dressed up like a bum, walked onto the church property just as church was letting out. And as the people filed into the parking lot, he walked up to one of the dumpsters in the lot and started eating pizza that had been thrown into the bin, while people watched him (no one knew that he had just planted the pizza there himself). This grossed out the church members so much that they called the deacons who promptly escorted him off the church property. The next week he began his sermon by informing the congregation that they had kicked their own pastor off the church property the week before, and then proceeded to preach on our passage this morning, the Matthew Mandate.

One of our church members here, that I greatly admire and respect, told me that he attended a seminar that required an interesting lab project. His choice was to exchange clothes with a homeless person and then to spend the next twenty-four hours begging for money until he made fifty bucks. He begged through the entire night and wasn't close to his goal. When morning came he walked to a church where people were arriving for their Sunday service, and still got almost nothing. He was feeling like a total failure with just an hour to go and needing more than fifteen dollars to make his goal, when one kind Christian man walked out of the church and handed him a twenty dollar bill. He almost fainted, he was so grateful, and after that experience, he said, "I can't pass by, or drive by, a homeless person anymore without stopping and giving them something.

Many times we need an experience, or a wake up call before the Matthew Mandate takes a hold on our lives. Peter Rollins is an interesting author who writes stories or parables that can snap us out of our comfort zone. In his excellent book, *The Orthodox Heretic*,<sup>3</sup> he tells a story that forces us to think about the Matthew Mandate, in a new way. He tells of Jesus and His disciples, coming upon a large crowd of some 5,000 poor people, who sit for

hours listening to Jesus powerful words. And when He is finished speaking, Jesus perceives that people are hungry, so He instructs His disciples to pass baskets through the crowd encouraging all the people to share whatever morsels of food they might have by placing them in the baskets. When all the baskets are filled, there clearly still isn't enough food to feed the 5,000, so Jesus has His disciples sit in a circle, then He joins them and they feast on all the food themselves, while the hungry crowd watches them. This story is meant to raise our anger as Christians, because it is so unlike Jesus to do such a thing. But, Rollins points out, that the church is supposed to be the Body of Christ on the earth, and yet, it owns incredible wealth, much of which comes from the poor, that is never shared with the poor.

It is our goal, here at Kingdom Life to spend as little as we can on salaries, buildings and leases, and as much as we can to help our community and to participate in the Matthew Mandate. There are many ways that we can do this. God has a big tool box, He never operates in a one-size-fits-all manner. Which leads me to our third and final point this morning.

**3. The Matthew Mandate provides one of the greatest opportunities for churches to work together in a kingdom manner.** I love our benevolence weekends, because even as we worship here in the sanctuary, the church is buzzing with activity. Rose and Mariam, and their teams, have done an amazing job of not just feeding and clothing people, but providing a Spanish speaking service that is growing each month, and which has allowed us to partner with some Spanish-speaking pastors in the area who have become part of the ministry. Partnering with fellow kingdom Christians to meet the needs of various people groups, in the spirit of faith that relies on our supernatural God, is what the church should be all about. Last week Michael and Vivian from The Gate, were here to attend our service. I was at their house church the Sunday before. And we are currently planning to partner together to provide concerts for young people in this area who are searching for something real. Michael has a father's heart, he and his wife have opened up their home to several young people who live with them and have come to know the love of God in the process.

One of the things that makes this church so unique is that we have a lot of spiritual fathers and mothers. There are a lot of young people today who have grown up without fathers or mothers, and God wants to use us to reach out to these young people and to provide them with a picture of God that they have never seen before. One of the blessings of being a Sabbath

Church is that we can partner with churches that meet on Sunday and attend each other's services without any competition or conflict. But we need to initiate these contacts and nurture them. I would like to have at least two volunteers from our congregation who would work with the Helping Hands Ministry over on Third Street in San Bernardino, this is a phenomenal interdenominational ministry that deserves our support. And it would be great if we could have two volunteers that would help once a week at the Blessing Center, another daily ministry, in Redlands that is fulfilling the Matthew Mandate.

As World Vision International says, we can't help everyone, but we can help someone. My goal this morning is to encourage everyone of us to participate in the Matthew Mandate in some tangible way. God has a big tool box and He calls us all in different ways. I recently finished a fascinating book entitled, *Under the Overpass*, by Mike Yankoski, which is the story of a young Christian man and his friend who were convicted to live as homeless people all over America for half a year.<sup>4</sup> Their adventures of faith are eye opening and life changing. No two of us will fulfill the Matthew Mandate in the same way, but God calls all of us to participate in this mandate.

As we close this morning I want to share an invitation with you that came to us from Steve Mason, the senior pastor of Oasis, who is currently in Romania. He has been involved with mission work there in one of the poorest nations of the world, to single mothers with children, for more than twenty years. Oasis has adopted a church that reaches out to these widows and orphans in a manner that not only helps to provide them with the necessities of life, but makes every effort to lead them to Jesus Christ as the ultimate answer, as well. Twenty-five dollars a month makes a huge difference in the lives of these families, often the difference between surviving and not surviving. Steve checks out every case to ensure that it is legitimate, and donors are encouraged to correspond by email with the families they are helping to build meaningful relationships. Then every year, those who are able, can actually travel to Romania to meet the families they are partnering with. Now that we are no longer under a denominational yoke, I think this kind of mission outreach would be awesome for our church, so I encourage you to pray about it. If you can't afford \$25 a month partner with another family or two and divide the amount between you.

We can't help everyone, but we can help someone, and God expects us to do that. I don't want to hear the words, "I was hungry and you ignored me," when He returns, do you? We are living in unprecedented times, I can feel God's Spirit breaking through in an unprecedented manner, one of the best ways to receive it is by fulfilling the Matthew Mandate.

<sup>1</sup> The two books that powerfully tell the Baker's story are: *Always Enough* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2004); and *Expecting Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> For a fascinating account of Mother Teresa's own internal struggles and questions about God and His very existence see, *Mother Teresa – Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta* (New York: Doubleday, 2007)

<sup>3</sup> Peter Rollins, *The Orthodox Heretic* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2009) pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Yankoski, *Under the Overpass: A Journey of Faith on the Streets of America* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2005).