

GOD-S GLOBAL GO

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Matt.28:16-20

Of all the words Jesus spoke, there was one which stood out from all the rest as being the most challenging. It was a little word and, if size had anything to do with importance, it would not have much of a chance against a multi-syllabic giant like antidisestablishmentarianism. But, fortunately, bigness is not synonymous with greatness. So whether it was addressed to the sick who came to Christ for healing, the sinners who came for forgiveness, or the disciples who sat at His feet waiting eagerly for His instructions, it was this word which sent them scurrying off to obey its challenge. The word was: AGo.®

Jesus used it many times.

One occasion was on the steps of the temple. He had been confronted with a woman taken in adultery. For a time it looked like the Pharisees had finally maneuvered Him into a position from which there was no escape. But with a sentence and a gesture of His hand in the sand, He dismissed them. When, at last, He was alone with the woman, He spoke this word of challenge: AGo...and sin no more.® His word to a repentant sinner. It was a challenge to live a pure and righteous life.

On another occasion, He was talking with His disciples when a young lawyer came seeking the way of eternal life. Jesus said, AWhat is written in the law? What does the law say?® The lawyer replied, AThou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.® As he spoke, Jesus nodded His approval and said: AThou hast answered right. This do and thou shalt live.® And the lawyer, wanting to talk further said, AWho is my neighbor?® Jesus told him the story of the good samaritan who, though he was a member of a despised race, showed greater mercy than did the priests or Levites. When He had finished His story, Jesus asked the lawyer, AWhich of the three do you think was the neighbor?® The man replied, AHe that showed mercy.® Then Jesus said, AGo and do likewise.® AGo.® His

word to a seeker. It was a challenge to live a life of service. Go bind up the wounds of the broken hearted. Go lift up the discouraged and fallen. Go and comfort the sorrowing. Go and be a good neighbor to those who are in need. Go and be merciful, even as the Father is merciful. Go and be gracious, even as He is gracious. What a challenge! AGo and do likewise.@ A challenge to live a life of service to others.

Still another time He used the word. It was in Galilee. He spoke it to eleven discouraged disciples. Their Lord had been crucified. Their hopes had been crushed. Their enemies threatened them. The voice of their testimony was stilled. They did not know what to do. To these discouraged, defeated, disillusioned disciples, the risen and glorified Christ came and said AGo.@ Pointing them to the power of God He said: AGo ye therefore and disciple all nations...and lo, I am with you always.@ His word to His saints. It was a word of challenge to missionary activity; and in that one little, two-letter word AGo,@ Jesus, for time and eternity, linked God=s people and missions together.

Today, nearly 2000 years later, we face the same challenge. We labor under the same mandate. It has never been rescinded. It is the unchanging commission AGo.@ AGo ye and disciple all nations.@ This is the word of challenge.

There are three words which I want to use this morning to delineate God=s Global Go. They are: Opportunity, Opposition and Obligation. To that extent, I am homiletically in balance, for a three-point sermon is always acceptable! From there on I am all out of kilter. Under the first point, I have four sub-sections. Under the second division, I have three -- and under the third, I have two. I'm afraid my homiletics professor would shudder at the thought! But I am telling you this in advance so you will know things pick up near the end.

I read just yesterday about a pastor whose people claimed he was a Awarm@ preacher. He made him feel pretty good until he got home and told his wife. She told him to look it up in the dictionary. He read: AWarm: Not so hot@.

Which reminds me of a little couplet:

AI never see my pastors eyes
Or see the light divine.
For when he prays he closes his
And when he preaches, mine.®

Well, enough of that! Now, the first word which delineates God's Global Go is:

Opportunity

One of the four factors which have made this an age of unprecedented opportunity is

1. The Re-discovery of Human Need

Back in 1951, when I was in Britain, I saw little sign of the religious hunger which has been so evident in recent months. Instead, there were aimless queues at any and all houses of amusement. Disillusioned workers meandered through the motions of earning a living. Packs of frustrated kids wandered about the streets. Everyone seemed bent upon forgetting the past. Living for the present. Letting the future be hanged.

Suddenly, all that has changed. The same Billy Graham who, in 1950, could hardly get a hearing in England last year reached an audience of over 1,000,000 in a few short weeks. The churches show signs of life for the first time in two decades as the men and women of Britain have, like Rip Van Winkle, awakened from too long a sleep to discover that life has nearly passed them by. They have suddenly been shaken out of their stupor into an awareness that their basic needs had not been met by running away.

What has happened in Britain has been duplicated in nearly every nation on the face of the earth. Our own country not excepted. Here, where even grammar school children are aware of the gigantic forces which could destroy us, the need may be most acutely felt. We have suddenly been stopped short with the discovery that our most brilliant intellectual and scientific achievements -- radar, jet propulsion, atomic power -- are the very forces which threaten to bring

about our demise.

We have become aware of our deeper human needs. And while all this has been taking place in the major nations of the world, our little brothers in distant lands have been awakening too. This shrinking globe upon which we live has made it possible for the hungry and down-trodden masses to look over the back yard fences which have separated us for many centuries to see that life does not have to be austere and difficult. They have suddenly come to the conclusion that change is possible and necessary. And they will not be denied. They have been made aware of needs they had never felt before or, better yet, never had words to describe.

For the present, they may think their needs are material. And of course, many of them are. That will change and soon the disillusionment of pure materialism will come and they will discover - as many of us have - that the real need of mankind is spiritual. That will be the Church's golden hour as we bend every effort to be ready when it comes. Along with this re-discovery of human need has come

2. A Re-discovery of the Bible

In the latter days of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century, the world went through an era of skepticism and intellectual perversity. A mood of rebellion discounted all tradition and the Bible was chucked aside as worthless. That, too, has changed.

Today, the mood is humbler. The scriptures are treated with respect for, in ways that could not have been imagined, it has been vindicated. So surprising has been the wealth of data which research has produced that a scholar today is ready to accept by faith what he would have been quick to deny a few years ago.

A vast increase in historical knowledge has established the bible in the minds of people as an historical record.

The silt of Ur.

The stones of Jericho.

The Dead Sea papyri.

The clay tablets of Ninevah.

The stone slab from Nazareth.

The inscriptions of Asia Minor.

All these have told their tales. As a result, many a person raised in a day of agnosticism has found a new confidence in the Bible as a book of fact. This new confidence has, in many cases, been the foundation for a deep and personal reverence for the word of God. No longer is it necessary for the minister to spend his time defending the Bible. It is proved to be its own best defense and science, the designated enemy of religion, has instead become its best friend. A third factor which has made this an age of unlimited opportunity is

3. A Re-discovery of Religion

Let me give you one striking illustration. The main event in the world of books this last decade was the completion and publication of the four final volumes of Toynbee's Study of History. The task, the greatest historical project of all time, has occupied 40 years and absorbed the energies of a lifetime.

Professor Toynbee set out to examine the score or more of civilizations which have risen and decayed and left a record behind them. He was seeking to discover the motive forces of human history. It is his theory that there is a pattern to history. By studying the past through an analysis of the reasons for successes and failures, it was his hope to instruct the future and rescue blundering humanity from past mistakes.

When I started, he said recently, religion was not a prominent feature in my mental landscape. I was then still in the callow stage of disbelief in the traditional form of the particular religion in which I have been brought up, so, I fancied that I had thrown religion out the window.

Aln writing my study, I have been constantly surprised to find religion coming back to fill an even greater place in my thoughts and feelings. To slough off religion would be to slither out of human nature, and that is not within any human being=s power. So, when a Study of History is finished, the historian=s religion remains. And what does the universe look like from the historian=s angle and vision? From this angle, it looks as if everything in the universe were on the move either toward its Creator or away from Him...@

Such is the amazing conclusion of the greatest historian alive. And Toynbee=s discovery has been duplicated in the hearts and minds of literally millions of people all over the world as they have been lifted out of the quicksand of disbelief onto the Gibraltar of religious faith. Capping it all has been the

4. Recent Development of Mass Communication And Modern Means of Transportation

Today, through the means of radio and television, it is possible for a man like Billy Graham to preach to more people in a half-hour than our Savior did in His entire earthly ministry. In the past, a missionary would spend two or three weeks, even months, walking through jungle entanglements to reach a mission outpost. Today, by means of airplanes, it takes her two or three hours.

These accomplishments are just the beginning. Certainly they will stir your imagination and you will see how these tools of the 20th century have truly made this an age of unprecedented opportunity. Now, through electronic miracles, it is possible to capitalize upon this re-discovery of human need by giving instantaneous, and almost universal, voice to the message: - God=s way is the only way.

Indeed, we live in an exciting moment in history. As never before we find fields Awhite unto the

harvest® as we are challenged by God's Global Go to make use of our unlimited opportunity, for ours is an unchanging commission: AGo ye and disciple all nations...and lo, I am with you®.

The second word which delineates God's Global Go is

Opposition

While we live in an age of opportunity without precedent, it is also an age of opposition without parallel. One phase of this opposition is the tremendous rise of

1. Nationalism

During the early years of missionary work, there was very little national feeling and scarcely any political consciousness among the masses of Africa and Asia. Now, however, there is a great awakening. Vast quantities of highly inflammable nationalistic literature are being devoured by multitudes whose eyes have been opened through great literacy campaigns. Everywhere, the cry is going up AAfrica for the Africans.® AAsia for the Asians.®

As a result, there is strong opposition to any kind of dictation from the West. This repudiation of Western influence includes Christianity, for it is considered by many as merely a front for Western aggression. They point to the Ambassador who is formerly a missionary and to the unequal treaties which benefitted religious workers as well as merchants.

Powerful nationalistic leaders have taken these isolated incidents and added to them a mass of half-truths which have created terrific opposition to Christian missions in many quarters. While we could easily brush these things aside as mere propaganda, never forget that multitudes who read them accept them as truth.

This problem of nationalism does not come from the other side of the ocean alone. There are vast throngs of our own people whose minds are closed completely to regions beyond. Although, and mind you they forget this, if Paul had refused the Macedonian cry, we would still be living in

caves. We would still be sucking the marrow out of the bones of our enemies. We would still be stumbling about in the squalor of savagery. We would still be expressing ourselves in the grunts of a monosyllabic language.

This very way of life we cherish, this very land we love so fondly, is a direct result of someone's missionary zeal. For, you see, there was a time when we were the Aforeigners@ and the civilized world looked upon America as a mission field. The second source of opposition lies in the rise of

2. Materialism

Missionaries are human, too, you know. They face the same temptations we do. The temptations to love this world too much, to desire ease and pleasure. And they certainly are not immune to the lure of security that has snared so many of us today.

But, because of their situation, the problems which result are much more acute. In fact, they work under constant scrutiny by the nationals who are weighing what they say against what they do. If the standard of living of an American missionary is any higher than that of the national he is trying to win, his effectiveness may be completely nullified.

In fact, things which we have come to accept as almost essential to life here in America might be completely out of place in some native areas.

The other day, a copy of a letter from an American missionary came across my desk. This is what the letter had to say.

AWe are now passing through some grave problems here. The tension between the nationals and missionaries is very marked at the present. In many respects, we realize that an age of missionary activity has come to an end. Something new will develop. Which way it will go I can hardly prophecy. Certainly it is true that our

condescending, capitalistic missionary work is now a lost cause in the world. We are no longer a superior people stooping to put redemption within the grasp of sin-steeped masses of inferiors. The missionary of the future is going to have to be made of sterner stuff than were his forbearers.@

The writer of that letter was right. Identification with the people is essential to winning them. And such identification may mean the giving up every vestige of the materialistic way we have come to accept as normal. Few young people will be willing to pay the price. But those who do -- who are made of sterner stuff -- will build a work which will last. The third source of opposition is to be found in

3. Communism

I will not take time to say much about this. In two weeks, I will bring two sermons on Communism and Christianity. Then we'll have an opportunity to deal more specifically with this cruel curse. Suffice to say the real reason for the rapid spread of Communism is to be found in the fact that it is not just an economic or political system, but essentially it is a pseudo-religion with a personal faith, a world view, and a dynamic urge to Aliberate@ the whole human race.

Listen to this clipping from a Chinese newspaper.

AWe Communists do not play with words. We are realists. Because we are determined to achieve our objective, we know how to obtain the means. Of our salaries and wages, we keep only that which is strictly necessary and we give the rest for propaganda purposes. To this propaganda, we concentrate all our free time and part of our holidays. You Christians only give a little time and money to the spread of your gospel. How can anyone believe in the supreme value of your religion if you do not practice it. If you do not spread it. If you do not sacrifice time and money for it.

Believe me, it is we who will win, for we believe in our
Communitistic message and we are ready to sacrifice anything,
everything, even our lives, in order that social justice shall triumph.
But you people are afraid to soil your hands.®

We may resent such criticism, but unfortunately we must admit that while not true of every Christian, it paints a true picture of far too many who profess to follow the Savior. It is tragically true that there are those who quite frankly admit they just aren't interested in missions and can't find time to support the primary reason for the church's existence.

Well, what's the answer? It is summed up in that third word which delineates God's Global Go - the word

Obligation

This is no time for milk and water religion. No time for a watered-down, lukewarm half-Christianity. This is an hour which demands your total loyalty.

For young people, it may mean taking up the challenge of the most difficult and demanding career in the world. And, where in all the world could you find a more challenging task than that of grasping the unlimited opportunities of this day and seeking to work out an answer to the almost crushing opposition which confronts us. Nothing else you could give your life to will require more in terms of self-sacrifice and self-surrender. But likewise, nothing else can offer such rich rewards. As Spurgeon so beautifully put it, If God is calling you to be a missionary, don't cheapen your life by becoming a king.®

For the women, it may mean setting some other activities aside in order to have time and energy to throw into the missionary program of your church. For instance, today may have been the first time you were ever confronted with the staggering opposition that faces our missionaries. Well, I could have painted a rosy picture flavored with sugar and spice and all things nice, but the picture

I have painted is true, while it isn't pretty.

Until we know what our problems are, we can never solve them. Well, now that you know about our oppositions, how about helping to find some answers to them? How about taking time to school yourself in the opportunities too? In other words, why not become an authority on the foreign policy of the Kingdom of God, remembering that there was a time when our land was a foreign missionary field and the religious life which has come to mean so much to us is only ours become someone cared enough to pray, work, study, plan and go.

For the men, it will mean catching a vision of the biggest business on earth. It will mean making God a real partner in your professional life. It will mean giving your partner His full share of your time, as well as your money. For if it is going to take the very best of our youth to meet the challenge of unprecedented opportunity and unparalleled opposition, then it is going to require stewardship unlimited on your part as laymen. You will not be able to figure your tithes to the penny. Your heart won't let you. Rather, you will have to give until it hurts - literally! But it is that kind of giving, and that kind of living which will match the opportunities, the oppositions, and the obligations of God's Global Go.

I remember hearing Charles Wells, a Christian newspaper columnist and cartoonist, tell of being in the Olympic stadium in Berlin in 1936. 100,000 German youth were there to hear the Führer speak. Hitler went on for an hour. As he came to the end of his speech, with mounting power and domination of that crowd, he shouted, 'We will march! And bleed! And die! We will march! And bleed! And die!' Twenty-one times he said it until that crowd of young people were absolutely mesmerized by that call to action. And then he paused and added, 'But, we will build a great Germany.' And 100,000 kids, caught up in the grasp of that grand concept, yelled, 'Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!' For an hour they went on.

That was 1936. A half decade or so later, Charles Wells was a war correspondent in North Africa. In a particular battle one day, a German fighter was shot down. The plane landed in a

kind of skidding fashion on the desert sand not far from where Charles Wells was watching. He and several others were near enough to run over in hopes of being able to free the young flyer before the plane exploded. They got him out. He was badly hurt and barely alive. Charles Wells said, AI held him in my arms to try to make it easier for him to breathe. I saw him struggling to lift his right hand. After great effort, he got it up and said, >Heil Hitler!-, and then he died.®

Well, you will never be called upon to march, bleed and die for Christ. But if you take God=s Global Go seriously, you will have to work and sweat and give and ache. The part which hurts most of all is that you will have to do it alone. The crowd will think you odd. Even some of those in the church will shake their heads in pity at your naivety. But put this down - and don't you forget it: You will build a kingdom of God in the lives of people; and that is worth all the sacrifice you may be called upon to make.

A moment ago I said you would work and sweat and give and ache alone. I was wrong. Two thousand years ago, a man made a promise and this was it: AGo, and disciple all nations, and lo, I am with you always.®