

**Oregon City United Methodist Church**  
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**Series: VICTORIOUS SECRETS (Stories between Resurrection and Ascension)**  
**Sermon: The Great Commission**

**Matthew 28:16-20**

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

**Sermon**

Go Ye, therefore, and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I like the King James for that line. Go ye therefore! Oregon City Methodist Church, you are a living example of the Great Commission, as it is called. You were started because someone else thought to go.

Here's a little history, and a small mystery. I shared some of this a few years back to a small group, but not to our Sunday morning crowd. If you've heard this story before, I hope you don't mind a refresher. So, a while back, I went down to the Lee Mission Cemetery in Salem, Oregon. I'm weird. I like cemeteries. Jason Lee is down there - the colonizer of Oregon, Methodist Missionary, contemporary of John McLaughlin, instrumental in making Oregon a state for America, over Canada, Russia, or the United Kingdom. His statue is one of two that we have in Statuary Hall in Washington DC. Lee is buried with family, and with other Methodists in that old, old graveyard. Many names on the tombstones I recognized from the pictures on our wall by the heritage room, former pastors of Oregon City.

Jason Lee was born in 1803 in Quebec, just over the U.S.-Canada line from Vermont. He was the youngest of fifteen children, and his father died when he was only five years old. By the age of thirteen, Lee found himself "thrown upon the world, without money, to provide for all my wants," as he later recalled. The 1810s and 20s, when Lee worked as a manual laborer, were a time of great religious fervor throughout the United States, when traveling preachers and revival meetings attracted huge crowds. It was at one of these revivals in 1826 that Lee first felt himself called to do the work of God. Despite his little previous education, Lee was accepted to the Wilbraham Academy in Massachusetts in 1829, where he trained to be a minister.

In the 1830's, four Native Americans made their way from Oregon to St. Louis to ask Governor Clark, of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition, for someone to teach them about the white man's book of heaven. The Methodist Episcopal Church back east got excited. They selected Lee as their Missionary. Five missionaries altogether, with the 31 year old Lee as their leader.

Lee and his fellow missionaries arrived in the Willamette Valley in the fall of 1834. Unfortunately, Lee didn't go to the tribe that asked for help. It is possible that Lee did not realize he was in the wrong place. In an area now known as Wheatland Ferry, ten miles north of Salem, they constructed a 32' by 18' mission building out of logs. The window sashes in the mission building were carved by Jason Lee with his jackknife. Today, Willamette Mission Park memorializes the original mission site.

How about this for a Sunday School. In the spring, a school for Indian children was established. Three children had been taken in at the mission during the first winter, two of them orphans in poor health. Of the original three children taken in, the one healthy child soon ran away to rejoin his tribe. In the mission's first year, an

estimated fourteen children were taken in, of which five ran away, five died, and two died the following year. Twenty five children were received the following year, sixteen of which became ill. Within 8 years, Natives had almost disappeared from the Willamette Valley. The deaths of children at Lee's mission made the local Indians wary of the missionaries, and caused many adults to avoid the mission altogether.

In response to Lee's pleas for funds and reinforcements, the Board of Missions in New York sent the "First Reinforcement." The group included two families and three unmarried women. The Board had selected one as a hoped-for compatible wife for Jason Lee. Today, we pastors might complain about the Board not picking out a right church for us. How would I like it if my DS got pick out my spouse? The voyage took ten months. They arrived in May of 1837. Only two months later, on July 16th, in a beautiful fir grove east of the Mission house, Anna Maria and Jason Lee were joined in marriage

In March of 1838, Jason Lee left the mission, his now pregnant wife and traveled east, returning to the United States with the hope of recruiting more missionaries. He brought with him a petition urging the U. S. to annex Oregon, signed by the ten men at the mission, 17 other American men, and nine French-Canadians who wished to be U. S. citizens. These 35 reportedly comprised three quarters of all white men in Oregon at that time. Lee took with him one Native American boy from Oregon to be a part of this promotional tour. Sadly, the boy died on the east coast not long into the tour. Lee received more sad news while still in the East. His wife Anna Maria had died in childbirth on June 26, 1838, not quite a year after their wedding - their child also passed away. While in New York with his grief, a friend introduced Lee to Lucy Thompson, a recent graduate of the Newbury Seminary. After a brief courtship, they were married. That fall, Lee and his new wife sailed for Oregon, along with fifty other new recruits for the mission. This group became known as the "Great Reinforcement." We Methodists just doubled the colonial population of Oregon.

Jason Lee's focus began to change, from the Natives to the Anglo's now arriving into the territory. However, not everyone shared Lee's vision for an Oregon filled with white, American, Christian settlers. Some of his fellow ministers disapproved of his leadership, and the mission board back east felt that he had abandoned the original goal of bringing God's word to the Indians and was wasting money and manpower on a "colonization scheme." In 1843, the board sent Reverend George Gary to replace Lee and restructure the mission. This bad news came while Lee was probably still mourning for his new wife Lucy, who had just died only three weeks after giving birth to their daughter, Lucy Anna Maria. The baby was named after both of Jason's wives. To defend his actions in person, Lee, his baby daughter and another couple left for the East Coast, taking ship with a stop in Hawaii along the way. Months later, reaching Hawaii, the next ship departing could only take one adult. Leaving young Lucy in the care of the other family, Lee sailed for New York to defend his actions to the mission board. Got that? He had to leave his only daughter with friends.

After meeting with the board back in New England, Lee was exonerated of misconduct and his title of Missionary to Oregon was reinstated. However, he became ill while visiting friends and family in the East, and returned to his family home in Canada, where he died in March of 1845, at the age of 41. He was buried in Canada. He was buried (at that time) in Canada.

Lee's daughter was raised by the family who had taken her in. She would grow up and teach at her father's school, Willamette University. She married, had a daughter, became Dean of the Students. But alas, she died when she was only 39. Her daughter Ethel would never marry nor have children. The Jason Lee line ended there.

They are all buried in Lee Mission Cemetery in Salem. Even Jason was dug up 60 years after his death and his remains were carried back to Salem to be buried next to his wives and children. Right between them. And a scripture that is laid upon one of the stones reads "Psalm 37:37; Notice good people, observe the righteous; peaceful people have descendants." Let me read it again. "Notice good people, observe the righteous; peaceful

people have descendants.” This was inscribed after they knew that Jason Lee wouldn’t have descendants. Do you see the mystery? I saw that inscription, and thought, he doesn’t have any descendants! Must not be very righteous! Or maybe it goes a little deeper than hereditary. I wonder if it is saying that we, we are the descendants of our spiritual pioneers into this country. And everyone of us, who bear the cross of Christ, are asked to bear fruit. To spread the good news. To raise the next generation of missionaries who will go into the next generation. Where love never ends, it’s a ripple that keeps on going and going and going. Go ye therefore, teaching all the nations.

We still Go ye therefore. We were home to the first civic meetings in Oregon City. We feed the hungry - through Hope (which started out of our church), and thru the garden. We care for the sick, visit the nursing homes. I’ve even visited the prison. From Mission Possible to our preschool to the youth mission trip to you name it, we continue to go ye therefore. The United Methodist Church has one of the most active and responsible missions in the world. Other churches send out missionaries to make more of whatever they are, we send out missionaries to build houses, dig wells, provide medical attention, to end malaria. Go ye therefore into all the world - we have missionaries throughout the globe, teaching, preaching, healing, working.

You have a lot to be proud of, and also a responsibility - are we still going ye therefore? What is your mission? The Great Commission is still valid for us today.

Just to give a taste of what our offering supports, a sample of one of thousands of ministries that we support, lets watch a short video of a missionary that truly goes, into all the world . . .VIDEO

Let us continue to be a church that Goes Ye Therefore, into all the world. And the people of God said, AMEN!