

Matt. 28:16-20 The Mission of the Church

Through the years, you have often heard the words, “*We want to create an environment where making disciples is normal.*” The reason we desire such an environment is because of Jesus’ command to us here in Matt. 28. In this passage we find the 11 disciples (minus Judas) waiting at the place Jesus had told them to wait for him. And when they saw him, they worshipped. Stop for a moment! V. 17 says “**when they saw him, they worshipped . . .**” Brothers and sisters we were created to worship. And we all worship something or someone. Worship is 24/7. Everything we do is a reflection of who or what we worship. To “**love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength**” is the greatest commandment. It is our top priority, our goal, our aim.

And in this passage, we see the apostles worship Jesus. To worship Jesus is to worship God. For He is God in the flesh. And as they worship Him, Jesus gives them their marching orders in this world. He gives them their practical mission on this earth: “**Go therefore and make disciples . . .**” Brothers and sisters, this is OUR mission! And we need this passage. We need to be reminded of this mission! With this in mind, I want to break vv. 18-20 down into 4 parts as each are vital to understanding our mission. (Authority, Scope, Command, Presence)

1. Authority. Our marching orders come with authority! In v. 17 we see that the Apostles worshipped Jesus. These men were good Jews. They knew that to worship a mere man would be blasphemy and idolatry at its height. They knew better than to worship a mere creature. Look also at v. 18. Jesus said to them, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**” Therefore, “*go and make disciples.*” It is of vital importance to us as we think about this command to know and understand the authority of the one who gives this command.

Kids, let’s say you are out in the yard playing with the other kids in your neighborhood. And as you are playing, one of them says to you, “*I think you should go home right now and clean your room.*” What do you think you would do? You wouldn’t do it. You would tell them to be quiet and keep playing. Even as a child, my sister would sometimes try and tell me what to do. And I would say, “*You aren’t my mother or my daddy.*” But, what if your Father or Mother comes to you and says with all seriousness, “*Right now, go and clean your room?*” What will you do? You will go? Why? Because of his/her authority.

Today, there is NO ONE with greater authority than the Lord Jesus! He is in essence God. And what we say about God we say about Him. HE is eternal. He was there before the foundations of the world. Col. 1:15-17 says, “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**” And when we consider the incarnation of Christ, we know that God took on flesh. But, He did not lay aside his deity. And the Apostle John says of Him, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**” And in him “**All the fullness of God dwells . . .**” (Col. 1:19) And this is why at his transfiguration on the mountain in front of Peter and John, a voice from heaven says, “**This is my**

beloved Son, Listen to him.” And when they heard the voice, *“they fell on their faces in terror”* (Matt. 5:5-6). Why? Because of the authority of the ONE who spoke.

And the authority of Jesus is not merely found in words, but also in power. When he spoke, the demons shuddered, they obeyed in fear, being cast out with a word. Terrifying storms were calm at his word. Sickness and death itself devoid of power as the Sovereign Lord healed the sick and raised Lazarus from the dead. And that’s not all. He laid down his life on a Roman cross as a sacrifice for sin. And he endured the wrath of God, and suffered in the place of sinners. At his death, defying all rules of nature, he cried out with a loud voice **“It is finished.”** And the centurion that stood by said, **“This is the Son of God”** (Mark 15:39). And then 3 days later, He rose from the dead. **“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Phil. 2:9-11).

Today, this is the ONE we worship. And this is the ONE who give us our orders: Go and make disciples. Our immediate application is obedience. It is for every believer. It is for every church.

2. Scope. When I say “scope,” certain questions come to mind. How far do we go? Where do we stop? To whom are we to make disciples? Is it just here with our neighbors, or do we go further? The answer is clear. V. 19 says, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .”** In Acts 1 Luke tells us that before Jesus ascended back to the Father, he said to his disciples, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth . . .”** (1:8). Our command is to make disciples of the nations, the peoples of the entire earth. This is the scope of our mission. You should remember well the message from last week on Rev. 5. Vv. 9-10 says, **“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”**

This truth should be clear to us, especially as we just preached through Isaiah. Over and over we hear words like those found in cp. 54:1-3: **“Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,”** says the LORD. **“Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.”**

Here in China Grove, we are the nations. The gospel came to many of our forefathers in Europe. And here we are today. And we will be part of that number from Rev. 5, around the throne of God. In Matt. 24:12 Jesus says, **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”** Brothers and sisters, we are still here. This must mean there is great work to be done; particularly among the unreached peoples of this world. And though most of us will not be called overseas,

as a church, if we are being obedient to Jesus' command, some of us will go. Timothy's calling was to STAY in Ephesus and be a pastor, and elder, as he worked in that local gathering of believers. Paul's calling was to go where the gospel had not been proclaimed. In Rom. 15:20-21 he says, **"I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."** He is simply being obedient to the command of Christ to go to the nations.

Kristen and I were reminded this past week as we spent time with folks living and working in some of the hardest places in the world so they might make disciples of the nations. We prayed for people group after people group. Let me give one story of one lady. (unnamed group)

App. Gospel is for all nations. For every individual is a sinner and needs to hear that forgiveness of sins can be found in Christ. We must not stop until this mission is complete. God knows when this will be! And the reason the unreached (7,367 groups according to Joshua Project) are still unreached is because it is difficult. But, we must press on! Jesus Christ is worthy!

3. Command. The main emphasis of vv. 19-20 is to "make disciples." This is a command! So, what does it mean to make a disciple? There is a lot we can say here, but I want to try and be as simple as possible. I think we can find the meaning from the text itself. Also found in this text are 3 more commands. They are: go, baptize, and teach. I want to talk briefly about each one of these to help us understand our mission.

i. Go. We've already covered this in the "scope" of our mission. For, it is a given that we must go. This word is a progressive command. Some translate it "as you are going." It is true that we are all "going" about in our neighborhoods and in the places God has put us. And, we must be about the task of making disciples as we go. But, this word is still a command. And it carries with it the force of a command as we MUST go. And we must go to all the peoples of this world. But, we don't simply go. We tell! Acts 1:8: **"You will be my witnesses . . ."** You may have heard the saying, *"Share the gospel, and when necessary use words."* This is ludicrous. ***"For faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God"*** (Rom. 10:17).

Paul understands this as he says in Rom. 10:13-15 (turn with me): **"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"** And the message is the good news. I am a Christian today because someone told me **"for God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son,"** and **"if I believe in him, I would not perish, but have everlasting life."** And God have his Son to be my savior, to save me from my sins. Like everyone, I am a sinner and fall short of God's glory. But, Jesus, who was not a sinner, obeyed all the commands of God in his actions and in his motive. And then, he laid down his life on a Roman cross as a sacrifice, a substitute sacrifice in my place. And in this sacrifice, the wrath of God was poured out and all that my sins deserved were laid upon Him. And God was satisfied. And 3 days later, He rose from the dead. And now He sits in heaven. And all those who believe in him will be saved.

ii. Baptize. Baptism is the sign of the new covenant. Those who, in repentance, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are commanded to be baptized. In the OT, the people of Israel were circumcised as a sign that they were God's people. In the NT, disciples are baptized. As my ring pictures that I am married, so my baptism pictures my union with Christ. And this we are commanded to do.

iii. Teach. The last command is to "teach." Teach what? "All that I have commanded you" (v. 20). As we go out our doors and as we go to the ends of the earth, we make converts and we teach the commands of Christ, which are the commands of God. And these commands are found in the Word of God. Let me give some further applications.

Application: To make disciples is more than mere conversion. Jesus did not leave his disciples for three years. Much of what we've seen through the years in SB churches, I believe, is a reflection of our failure to emphasize "obedience to all the commands of Christ." Walk an aisle. Raise your hand. Get baptized. Then go home and live as you want as we claim you in our numbers. Shame on us.

Application: Making disciples is an ongoing messy process. And disciples are at different places in their sanctification. This is why Paul tells the older women in Tit. 2 to "**teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled . . .**" (vv. 3-5). And, that the older men to "**urge the younger men to be self-controlled,**" and "**to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech . . .**" (vv. 6-8).

Application: From another perspective, our mission is to duplicate ourselves. Disciples make disciples . . . that make disciples . . . that make disciples . . . etc. In the context of elders (though the application and command is to ALL of us), Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:2: "**what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.**" So I must ask, Who are you speaking to? Who are you meeting with? Who are you teaching to obey the commands of Christ? Are you multiplying yourself? We must do this individually. And, we must do this as a church.

Application: Disciples will be made by someone whether we do it or not. And if we cease to make disciples, we cease to fulfill our mission and in my opinion cease to be a church. I say this because Jesus says, "**I will build my church . . . and the gates of hell will not prevail**" (Matt. 16:18).

Application: The mission of the church is not merely to do good works. Our primary task is not to feed the hungry, or teach people to read, or build hospitals or schools, or improve human rights (though we do all these things). Our mission is to make disciples of Christ!

4. Presence. Very briefly, look at the last part of v. 20. "**And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**" What was lost in the fall of man, we have now gained in Christ. What a fitting way to end this passage with our mission before us! What a fitting way to end the Book of Matthew! Any time we see the word "Behold" we must know what follows is something worth

beholding, something great or unusual. This is what Paul calls, “**Christ in you, the hope of glory . . .**” (Col. 1:27). I would argue, from one perspective, that it is this truth that compels us to do the difficult work of making disciples in this world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, we press on! It is the presence of God, without which, we would fall by the wayside. This is why we go! This is why we walk next door, this is why we take our families to the ends of the earth. And I would argue, this is why we press on in this difficult world of sin. This is why we say with Martin Luther: “*Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also. The body they may kill. God’s truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever.*” God is with us!

This is our mission: Make Disciples. The Lord of the universe has given this command. And, this command comes with authority. The scope of our mission is the world, even those difficult unengaged, unreached, people groups that still remain. Our practical command is to make disciples. We go, we baptize and we teach; we teach them to obey all the commands of Christ. And, in this difficult world God is with us! He is with us in the Son, as He give us the Holy Spirit as we go.

To God be the glory!