

Great Claim, Great Commission, Great Comfort

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[0 : 00] Lord Jesus, once again, we give you thanks that you enabled Matthew the tax collector to remember what you said, to write it down for us accurately.

We thank you that you've preserved this text for these hundreds of years. And now, I pray in your mercy and grace that you would help us enter into the reality this text is describing as never before. For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. What does it mean to follow the risen Jesus? What does it mean to be a community following the resurrected Savior?

What does it mean for being and doing church in this city? It means coming to terms with his great claim.

It means finding ways to obey his great commission. And it means learning to trust his great comfort.

[1 : 07] Here's the context. On Easter morning, the angels at the tomb said to the women, He is risen. He is going before you into Galilee, and there you will see him.

So, they go into Galilee, to a mountain which Jesus had designated, and there Jesus meets them. On a mountain. On a mountain. On a mountain. If you are familiar with a larger biblical story, you know how many turning points in that story take place on mountains.

If you are familiar with the larger Jesus story, you know how many significant events in his life take place on mountains. For instance, he preaches his greatest sermon from a mountain.

The Sermon on the Mount, where he is describing this new humanity that he is bringing into being in the world. He is transfigured on a mountain. It's there that his face glows that it has never had before.

[2 : 08] It's there that Moses and Elijah meet with him. It's there that a voice comes out of heaven and says, this is my son. Listen to him. It's from a mountain across the valley from Jerusalem that Jesus sees the city of Jerusalem and weeps over it.

Because it does not know the things that make for peace. It's from the mountain, the Mount of Olives, across from Jerusalem's temple, that Jesus speaks of his return.

Where he calls his disciples to be alert to this any moment now return to establish the kingdom of God. The first time we hear of Jesus on the mountain is during his 40 days when he is tested and tempted, when he fasted.

He's tempted by this angelic creature who has tried to usurp God's place in the world. By the evil one who sought to rule the nations of the world.

I will give you all the kingdoms of the world, Satan says to Jesus. See them, Jesus. See them from the mountain. Amen. Judea and Galilee and Persia and Greece and Rome.

[3 : 14] All of them. I will give you if you simply bow down to me on this mountain and worship me. On that particular mountain, God's enemy dared to take to himself the right only God has.

The right to give the nations of the world. Psalm 2. God's son repeats God's speech. You are my son. Ask of me and I will give you. The nations of the world is your inheritance.

On that mountain, the deceiver, the destroyer, dared to suggest that he could give the nations to Jesus. And then, on this other mountain, after his resurrection, Jesus finally has what only God can give.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him, says Matthew. But some doubted. Worshipped and doubted.

They often go together, do they not? Worship and doubt. The word here for doubt does not mean outright disbelief. It means that some in that little company simply did not know what to make of what had happened to Jesus.

[4 : 25] They could see that he is alive. And they wanted to remain in this community following Jesus. But they simply did not know what to make of resurrection and ascension and salvation and kingdom.

They worshipped him, says Matthew. Now, Matthew the Jew knows how startling a statement it is that he makes.

That they worshipped Jesus. Worship a man. It's the same word that Matthew uses of the Magi who, in the Christmas story, come and find the infant Jesus and bow down to him and worship him. Worship a man. And the startling thing on the mountain is that Jesus receives their worship. He does not tell them to stop doing it.

When an angel gives the vision to the apostle John that becomes the last book of the Bible, John bows down to the angel and worships the angel twice.

[5 : 28] John, who should know better, worships the angel twice. And twice the angel says, in horror, Do not do this. Worship God. On the mountain, this early community of followers of Jesus, Worship Jesus.

Jesus is not horrified. Jesus does not stop them from doing it. Jesus receives the worship.

Reflecting his own self-understanding.

As one who is worthy of the worship. He knows himself to be. Emmanuel. God with us. Resurrected and alive.

And then on that mountain, Jesus speaks to this community following him in the world. He makes a great claim. He gives a great commission.

And he promises a great comfort. And in so doing, He opens up for us this new space in which He now calls us to follow.

[6 : 32] A great claim, a great commission, and a great comfort. The great claim.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Absolutely crazy if it is not absolutely true.

Insane if it is not true. It blows the circuit boards of my brain to hear him say this. All authority in heaven.

Mercy. All authority on earth. Mercy. Has been given to me.

Who does this me think he is? The great claim is an inherent implication of the resurrection.

[7 : 34] To the risen one is given all authority. My friend Dale Bruner renders Jesus' words this way.

I am the chief executive officer of the universe. Again, this is absolutely crazy if it is not absolutely true.

I now have the last word everywhere. In the heavenly realm. And in the earthly realms. I now have the last word in every sphere of human life.

In every city of the world. The private and the public. The religious and the secular. In the moral, the scientific, the economic, the sexual, the political, the legal, the medical.

In business, in entertainment, in sports. To me is given the very last word in everything. Mercy.

Mercy. The risen Jesus is not bragging here.

[8 : 39] He is simply stating the way things are in light of his death and resurrection. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Not taken. He does not take as the Satan wanted him to. But it's given to him. By the living God who has raised him from the dead. Now, as I see it.

The church in our time has not even begun to come to terms with what this means. Am I right? As followers of the risen Jesus, we have not even begun to work out all the implications of this gigantic claim.

Understandably so. The implications are literally cosmic. The apostle Paul writes to the believers in the first century city of Ephesus.

He says of Jesus that God raised him from the dead and has seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named.

[9 : 48] And has put all things in subjection under Jesus' feet. Do you believe this? The apostle John speaks of Jesus as, quote, The first born from the dead.

The ruler of the kings of the earth. Ruler of the kings of the earth. Do you believe this? Paul and John are not speaking poetically.

They're not speaking mythologically. They don't think they're stating some opinion that they came up with. They believe that they are declaring news what Russell Chandler, a former editor of the Los Angeles Times, called hard copy.

Jesus really lived. Right? Jesus really died an awful death. Right? Jesus really rose from the dead. Jesus really is alive. Right? Right? And to him, all authority, everywhere, has been given.

[10:53] Again, Jesus is not bragging. He doesn't brag. He's just stating the facts. Two plus two equals four. Two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom make water.

B.C. is one of the most beautiful places to live in the world. Hendrik Sedin has scored 112 points so far.

Alex Ovechkin is stuck at 109 in the third period of the game. And all authority in heaven and all authority in earth has been given to the man who was crucified by those who thought they had the authority.

Authority. Authority. The word is exousia. And it literally means out of being.

Ek. Out of. Uzia. Being. After Jesus preached his sermon on the mount, the crowds were moved because, as they said, he spoke with authority. He spoke with exousia.

[12:01] He spoke out of being. Jesus' words, which challenged the socks off his hearers, rang without a being. They resonated with the really real.

This is why, by the way, when anyone meets Jesus, they speak of coming home. No one who meets Jesus speaks of meeting a stranger.

Because he is reality itself. When we surrender to him, we are surrendering to life. We are surrendering to life itself. Exousia. The really real. All authority given to me.

Of course. And a very different kind of authority. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, his first disciples are regularly wrestling with their positions in the kingdom he was inaugurating.

And at one point, Jesus says to them, Jesus exercises his authority in an unexpected way.

[13:32] In the way of servanthood. In the way of giving his life for the life of the world. Washing his disciples' feet is no blip on the oscilloscope.

It's not an exception to the way he lived among his disciples as Lord. He washes his feet not as a contradiction of his authority, but as a manifestation of his authority.

Being servant is what having authority is all about. Servant love is at the heart of the universe. Servant love is on the throne of the universe.

The CEO of the universe exercises his authority over all by serving all. Mercy. Mercy. And coming to terms with Jesus' great claim is what it means to follow him in the world.

And finding ways to obey his great commission. Go make disciples of all the nations. Literally it is. Go disciple the nations.

[14:40] Of course. Given the great claim, the great commission is a natural consequence. And given the scope of the great claim, we understand the scope of the great commission.

All authority. All nations. Go. Make disciples of all the nations. You might know in this text that the go is not a command.

Literally it is in going. In your going. The assumption being that once we know who Jesus is. The assumption being that once we know the place he has in the universe, we will go.

Once we've been gripped by the reality of the resurrection, we begin to move. We move into mission. All four gospel writers emphasize this.

In Mark, Jesus says, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. In Luke, Jesus says, repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed to all the nations.

[15:43] In John, Jesus says, has the Father sent me, so I send you. And now here in Matthew, Jesus says, in your going. What else are we going to do when we realize this new space brought into being by the resurrection?

Make disciples of all the nations. The word here is ethnoi, from which we get the word ethnic. Make disciples of all ethnic groups in the world.

Jesus is saying, they belong to me. Now go help them live as mine. And that is why he's building his church on this corner in this city.

That's why he builds his church on any corner in any city. We exist to disciple peoples. Not just individuals. But whole people groups.

Whole nations. Bring all the people groups into my great claim. Bring all people groups into this new reality in which all authority has been given to the man who lives by giving his life for the world.

[16:57] Thus fulfilling God's call on Israel. Fulfilling God's call on Abraham and Sarah so long ago. Go and I will bless you. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

The CEO of the universe plans to bless the world by making disciples of all nations.

Disciples. Not just converts. Not just church members. But disciples. Disciples who can in turn make disciples. Who can in turn make disciples.

Who can in turn make disciples. Disciples. Now I know that this word disciple makes some people uncomfortable. People have said to me throughout the years.

I am just a follower. I could never imagine being a disciple. Well the Greek term for disciple is the word mathetes. And it simply means learner.

[17:58] Or student. A disciple is a learner. A disciple is a student. Always a student. We are always in this learner posture at the feet of Jesus. Go make learners of the nations.

Make learner making learners. Go make students of the nations. Go make student making students of all the nations. Isn't that exciting?

Now what helps me is to realize that every human being is a disciple. Every human being is a disciple of someone.

Or something. Or some ideology. Or some philosophy. Every human being on the face of the earth is a disciple of someone. Right?

You agree? The question therefore is never will I be a disciple. The question is always whose disciple will I be.

[18:58] We are going to be disciples. Whose will we be? If not Jesus' disciple then whose?

Who else has exousia? Who else speaks out of being? Who else lives by giving his life for the life of the world? Who else has conquered death?

As Peter, one of Jesus' early disciples said to him. Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. The question is never will I be a disciple.

The question is always whose disciple will I be. What a privilege. The risen Jesus is granting us. Come be my disciple.

In the first century, people would want to have a master or a mentor or a life coach. Understandably so. Someone who would guide them through life.

[19:53] And so, they would go around the villages looking for someone. And then apply to that someone to become that someone's student. Jesus never waits for anyone to apply.

Jesus goes through the villages and towns and cities and calls people into the grand adventure of discipleship. That's why when Jesus came that day to the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee and said, Follow me.

They got up and followed. The text says immediately. They immediately got up and followed. That's because those fishermen knew a good thing when they heard it.

No one had ever come to them and invited them into discipleship. And they got up and did it. Jesus would later say to them, You did not choose me, but I chose you.

And you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and me. Mercy, even me. In the first century, Becoming someone's disciple meant, at minimum, Adopting the thinking of the master and imitating the behavior of the master.

[21:09] So in the first century, come, follow me, be my disciple, would mean, Come, adopt my thinking and come imitate my behavior. What a privilege.

He to whom all authority in heaven has been given. He to whom all authority in earth has been given. Calls us to adopt his thinking and imitate his behavior.

Come, and I will teach you to see the world the way I do. I'm going to teach you to think about God the way I think about God.

To think about humanity the way I think about humanity. To think about history the way I think about history. To think about this city the way I think about this city. Come, and I will show you how to behave as a true human being.

What a privilege. Now, the fact is, Jesus goes beyond the promises of the first century masters. There are three other words that describe what Jesus has in mind in making us disciples.

[22:17] They are attachment, submission, and participation. Attachment. The rabbis of the first century would call people to the law or to the Torah.

The philosophers of the first century would call people to an idea, to a system of thought. Jesus calls people to himself. The call is not follow Torah or not follow the idea, but follow me.

Be yoked to me. Abide in me. Eat of me. Drink of me. Live in me. Jesus attaches his disciples to himself. What a privilege. And submission.

Once attached to him, he then calls us to just do what he says. Later on, he would say to his disciples, or earlier on, he said to his disciples, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?

A process of teaching whereby in every circumstance, in every challenge, in every new crisis, we learn the will of the one who has final authority.

[23 : 21] Now, notice how Jesus in this text refers to his teaching. He does not call his teaching principles to live by, although they are.

He does not call his teaching doctrine to master, although it is. He does not call his teaching philosophy to contemplate, although it is.

He calls his teaching commands. All I have commanded you. Being Jesus' disciple means obeying his commands, submitting our will in ever deeper way to his claim upon our lives.

And the wonderful thing is, Jesus' commands are not burdensome. That's how the apostle John put it. His commands are not burdensome. Why are they not burdensome?

Because Jesus' commands come out of authority. They come out of being. Jesus' commands emerge out of the way life was supposed to be lived.

[24 : 26] When we hear his commands, we are being led into life as it's supposed to be. When we surrender to his commands, it turns out we are surrendering to life. Now, here's where Matthew helps us.

Matthew so wants us to be good disciples of Jesus. And Matthew so wants us to be involved in this making of disciples in the nations that he gathers up Jesus' teaching.

He gathers up Jesus' commands into five books. Five times in the Gospel of Matthew, we hear the phrase, after Jesus had finished saying these words.

Five times, Matthew gathers up all of Jesus' words into these five sections. Now, why five sections? Could it be that because the great leader of Israel, Moses, had all his teaching in five books?

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy? Matthew, I think, believes that Jesus is the new Moses. Matthew believes that Jesus is a whole lot more than the new Moses, but he is at least that.

[25 : 38] And as the new Moses, like Moses, Jesus also has five books. Book one, the Sermon on the Mount, chapters five to seven.

Book two, the Sermon on Mission, chapter 10. Book three, the Sermon on the Mystery of the Kingdom of God, chapter 13. Book four, the Sermon on Managing Life in the Church, chapter 18.

And book five, the other Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon from the Mount of Olives on Jesus' return, Matthew 24 and 25. And I think what Matthew has done is he's offering these five books to us as a kind of discipleship manual.

I think Matthew is saying to us, take people through these five books, help them live in these five books, and they will grow to be good disciples of the risen Jesus.

Attachment, submission, and participation. Not just follow behind Jesus, not just imitate Jesus, but participate in Jesus.

[26 : 49] Participate in his life, which turns out to be life in the Father and life in the Spirit. He calls us to participate in his life with the Father and in his life with the Holy Spirit.

Imagine that. That's why on the mountain he says, go baptize them. Baptize them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. As you know, to be baptized means more than just getting wet. To be baptized means entering into the reality signified by going into the water. The incredible privilege of being a disciple of Jesus is entering into the very life of the triune God.

Should I say that again? The great privilege of being a disciple of Jesus is entering into the very life of the triune God.

When we are baptized into water, it's a sign that we have been baptized into the name. We've been immersed into the name. We've been immersed into God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[28 : 01] To be baptized in water is to be immersed into the life and love of God the Father, into the grace and truth of God the Son, into the purity and power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus calls us to participate in the life of the Trinity. Whose disciple would anyone rather be? And to participate in the work of the Trinity in the world.

To join the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their wonderfully creative work in the world in all spheres of life. Disciple.

Everyone in our city is a disciple of someone or something. The question is never, will I be a disciple? The question is always, whose disciple will I be? Go make disciples of all nations. Help the nations enter into the new reality where Jesus is CEO. Help the nations understand this new space and live in this new space by baptizing them into the fullness of life in God and by teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

[29 : 08] The man who gives his life for the life of the world is on the throne. The risen man is at the helm of the universe. Go disciple the nations into this wonderful new reality.

What a privilege. And they did it. Those who met Jesus on the mountain after his resurrection left the mountain, went back to the city, and they did it.

And I can imagine them turning to one another along the way and saying, we, we, we 11 unknowns, are going to disciple nations like who does Jesus think we are?

But they did it. They began serving the people Jesus began to bring across their path. And we are here because they did it.

That is what being a community following Jesus is all about. Finding creative ways to obey his great commission. I submit to you that we are to ask of all we do here.

[30 : 21] What, how does this help make disciples? How does this help disciple the city and the nation? I think we are supposed to ask of all of our program and all of our activity.

How does this help us stay on task? How does this help the city come into this new space? Great claim, great commission, and great comfort.

Being the church is all about learning to trust this great comfort. Look, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age.

All authority, all nations, all I've commanded you, and all the days. The church does not go into this great commission alone. The risen and ascended Jesus is there with us.

Now how? How is he with us? That we will unpack next Sunday. In the meantime, I'd like to leave you with an observation made by philosopher Dallas Willard about all that we have said today.

[31 : 34] Dallas Willard writes this. Multitudes are now turning to Christ in all parts of the world. How unbearably tragic it would be if the millions of Asia, South America, and Africa were led to believe that the best we can hope for from the way of Christ is the level of Christianity visible in Europe and North America today.

A level that has left us tottering on the edge of world destruction. The world can no longer be left to mere diplomats, to mere politicians, and to mere business leaders.

They've done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual heroes. A time for men and women to be heroic in faith and in spiritual character and power.

And then Dallas Willard writes this. Listen. The greatest danger to the Christian church today. The greatest danger to the Christian church today.

The greatest danger to the Christian church today is that of pitching its message too low.

[32 : 55] I will not be guilty of pitching the message too low. And neither will we. Let us pray.

This is huge, Lord. It's just so huge. You know I've struggled to find words to make this clear.

But it's huge. Your great claim. Your great commission. And as we'll see next week, how huge is your great comfort.

I think I can speak for the majority of people in the room today when I say, Lord, I want to be a good and faithful disciple.

I want to be part of your grand plan, discipling the nations.

[34 : 26] We thank you for the favor, your favor we are experiencing at First Baptist. We pray.

That we would be all you want us to be on this corner, in this city, at this time. That's really huge, Lord.

So grant us huge grace. Amen.