

Go And Make Disciples

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[0 : 00] Let's read together once again from Matthew chapter 28, and we will read from verse 16.

Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Now, the last words of anybody are important and interesting.

When I worked in Airdrie Health Centre and saw people that had lost a loved one, often as part of the conversation would come round to what were their last words.

[1 : 29] And of course, the last words of famous people are also interesting. So, Alfred Hitchcock, the film director, said this, I quote, One never knows the ending.

One has to die to know exactly what happens after death, although Catholics have their hopes, unquote. Leonardo da Vinci, quote, I have offered God and mankind, sorry, I have offended God and mankind, because my work did not reach the quality it should have, unquote.

Beethoven, quote, Friends applaud, the comedy is over, unquote. Henry Ward Beecher, a 19th century American evangelist, quote, Now comes the mystery, unquote.

What we've read today from Matthew chapter 28, verses 16 to 20, are the final words of Jesus Christ, before he left to be at the right hand of his father.

And if there are important last words, I cannot think how more important these words of Jesus Christ are, his parting words.

[3 : 10] For whom does the church exist? Some people have said exclusively for the people of God.

And other people, such as William Temple, a well-respected and well-known Anglican priest, who was born in the 19th century, in the 1880s, and died in October 1944, he was admired and respected for his scholarly writing, his inspirational teaching and preaching, his constant concern for those in need or under persecution, and for his willingness to stand up on their behalf to governments at home and abroad.

His quote was, the only organisation on earth that exists for its non-members is the Church of God. And I'm sure, like most things, the truth is somewhere in between those two poles.

Although, it perhaps is worth remembering that quote of William Temple, given the subject of our sermon today. Its subject, I'm sure you've guessed, is the Great Commission.

And I'm going to explore the Great Commission under three headings. The mandate for the mission, the mission statement, and the marvellous assurance.

[4 : 56] But before I plunge into that, there's just one or two comments I want to make. First of all, the location for the launching of the commission.

Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

Galilee is about 80 miles on foot from Jerusalem. Jesus rose from the dead in Jerusalem.

One might ask the question, why did he not show himself even to the secular authorities? And why did he decide that the launching pad for the Great Commission would be in Galilee and it would be on a mountain?

Now, there's various answers that you might speculate. It clearly doesn't tell us. But what it does tell us is that Jesus had already said to his disciples before he was crucified that not only will I be crucified and not only will I rise from the dead, but I will go before you to Galilee.

[6 : 26] Galilee is where most of his ministry took place and Galilee is where most of his disciples came from.

Galilee is where he launched his ministry. Galilee is where most of his disciples came from. Galilee is where most of his disciples came from. You read that in Matthew chapter 4.

If I can just find that. Galilee is where most of his disciples came from. Galilee is where most of his disciples came from. Galilee is where most of his disciples came from. Now, when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

And leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, by the sea, which is by the sea of Galilee, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

And then it says, from that time Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[7 : 40] So Galilee has many connections. It connects with the launch of the ministry of Jesus on earth. It connects with the calling of his disciples, but it also connects with the prophecy of Isaiah.

And the thing about Galilee is that there were synagogues in Galilee, there were plenty Jews in Galilee, but there were also plenty Gentiles, people from other nations, so that the trajectory way up there in upper Galilee, about 120 odd miles, Jesus was, his trajectory, the way that he was facing, you might say, was global.

And perhaps there is tremendous symbolism in the fact that the disciples went to Galilee, and they went to a mountain.

Just say something, I've been talking about Galilee, just say something about the mountain, because I'm assuming there's some symbolism here as well. It was on a mountain, of course, that Moses launched, what you'd call the early part of God's purpose.

and here it is, on another mountain, facing a trajectory and a direction that is global, that Jesus stands and issues the Great Commission.

[9 : 14] and he issues that Great Commission, as I say, with that trajectory in mind and also with the atmosphere of authority, all authority is given to me.

And also, notice the statement, commanded to observe all things that I have commanded. This is the launch of the one that was to come, of the one that all of prophecy had pointed to.

And so, there is something about the location of the launch. And I just want to say one more thing about these introductory comments.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

But some doubted. Who were the some that doubted?

[10 : 38] It looks, doesn't it, like a natural reading of those verses, a surface reading, if you like, that it's some of the eleven. The subject is the eleven.

Although, some people have said that there may well have been many other disciples, some talk of the five hundred that's mentioned by Paul, and some even wonder if there might have been other disciples, and it was some of them.

But, this is a personal comment that I'm about to make. I am very grateful that that phrase is where it is. I have doubted not just once, not just twice, I have doubted, and I'm very, very grateful that the Holy Spirit has decided at that momentous occasion these people who physically looked at Jesus Christ, and these people that looked at him, those eleven, he gave that commission to, but some doubted.

Don't think for a nanosecond if you ever have any doubts about your faith, or about the Bible, or about God, that that means that you're not a Christian, but some doubted.

let me move into the first aspect of this, because what I want us to do for the rest of the time is to walk through this Great Commission together.

[12 : 35] And the first thing I want you to notice is the mandate that prefixes the Great Commission. It's very, very important. verse 18.

Very difficult for me to see the reading because the print is so small. And notice it says, and Jesus came and said to them.

It doesn't just say Jesus said to them, it said Jesus came and said to them. And I think we can use our imagination a little here.

I think that Jesus drew closer to them so that they would definitely hear these words that were about to drop from his lips.

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. there's two things that we need to grasp here.

[13 : 50] And I want you to notice so at the very beginning of the Great Commission and at the very end we'll come to that as we get to the end it's bracketed in words of great assurance.

there is no authority in heaven and on earth that can bring into question the success of this mission. There is no devil there is no evil spirit there is no dictator there is no Stalin there is no Hitler there is no oppressor where this world all devils o'er and waiting to devour us not can they harm us because all power has been given unto me in heaven and on earth.

and notice not just the statement about the comprehensiveness and absoluteness of this power that he has this authority notice it was given to me this is not somebody who carried out a coup this is not somebody who seized power illegally far from seizing power he won that power hanging on a cross so there is the first thing the mandate for the great commission to give us assurance he's not going to tell us to go into all the world without reminding us that

I have all authority this is my mission this is my project and I will take care of it and I have all the power and authority for it to deliver its outcomes secondly the mission statement itself there are four parts to it let's go through those four parts go therefore go therefore I want you to notice that word therefore it's linking with what

[17 : 05] Jesus said about all authority is on heaven and earth has been given to me Jesus is saying in the light of what I've just told you about all authority that has been given to me in heaven and earth in the light of that encouraged by that inspired by that inspired to have confidence and to have boldness go well we're hoping that people might come into the services go we're praying for people to come in to the services go Jesus himself of course didn't he he had heard that call go and rescue prodigal humanity the second part of the great commission is make disciples not mega churches forgive me not bums on seats not merely to sign a decision card

I'm not knocking that there are tens of thousands of people who are in the body of Christ who have signed decision cards but to make disciples disciples what is a disciple and the same question could be asked what is Christianity about is it only about being justified make disciples who are disciples all you need to do is look in the four gospels and you'll get the answer they're people who follow Jesus they're people who are with Jesus they're people who are listening to Jesus they're people who have left their previous life style and all that is predicated upon it whether it is materialism or pleasure or whatever it might be to follow Christ make disciples I'm not simply asking myself and you today if you've made a decision for Christ I'm asking you are you a disciple of Christ do you go where he wants you to go do you seek to try and be what he wants you to be do you have him every day in your mind's eye as your model thirdly baptizing them now remember we said these are the last words of

Jesus Christ before he left this earth and went to sit at the right hand of the father and one of these words was baptizing them just sometimes maybe a little I wonder if we show enough give enough countenance to baptism if we underplay it maybe a little I just wonder about that sometimes I myself was fully immersed and my children were sprinkled but I think that it's a tremendous moment when anyone is baptized and

I just feel it should be marked off perhaps I know that the bar mitzvah the Jewish boy coming of age at 13 it's a tremendous celebration it's a festival it's a something that you know I just wonder if we're under playing baptism go make disciples baptizing them what is baptism baptism baptizing them into and I'm using that word deliberately because it's the more intensive word that's used there in our Bibles not just in but into the name of the

[23 : 06] Father the Son and the Holy Spirit remember I was saying in Wednesday when we think of some of these things as we're thinking about the life eternal in a sense it should evoke from us wow it should evoke from us a legitimate use of the word awesome I say legitimate because my dear son in Canada he's got into this habit of calling about everything awesome whether it's a hamburger or a syrupy donut he usually invites me to come along with him to experience some awesome hamburger or a syrupy donut but this is truly awesome that we've just read here baptizing them into the name of the

Father the Son and the Holy Spirit so put that way at this point there are different metaphors and images of baptism throughout the New Testament doesn't simply have one image you think the

language that's used here this is the language of initiation this is the language of belonging this is the language that marks those that are baptized as the people of God now of course baptism is the outward picture and symbol of what is an inner reality and the inner reality is notice the order go make disciples then baptize so it's the outer picture of the inner reality that someone has become a disciple of

Jesus Christ so it conveys initiation and belonging although Calvin also adds to those ideas of initiation and belonging confession and this is certainly true and also notice the sort of just in passing I'm not here to give a sermon on baptism as such or infant baptism or non-infant baptism or critique or talk about any of that at the moment but certainly notice this this presupposes adults this presupposes that in this mission this distinct mission that this is reaching out to people that are able to learn as we will see in a moment

Calvin said that it's also useful as a confession and that's true that as we are baptized we're really making a confession we've thrown our lot in with Jesus Christ it's him that we belong to now I belong to Jesus belongs to me not for time alone but for eternity does Jesus belong to you this is not about coming to church at the moment this baptism is really asking the question do you belong to Jesus does Jesus belong to you Calvin also said everyone who has God for their father has the church for their mother

I'll repeat that quote again everyone who has God as their father has the church for their mother is Calvin correct absolutely he's 100% correct because every single true disciple of Jesus Christ is a member of the universal body of Christ not talking about a congregation just now not talking about a visible church and talking about the body of Christ which is the church so that every single person who has God as their father has the church for their mother so it's impossible to imagine that you're a Christian but you're not part of the church and therefore to think that you should not go to the visible and physical expression of that just like baptism is a sign and a symbol and a visible expression of truth so the church is the visible expression and truth of the fact if you're a disciple that you have

[28 : 50] God as your father you have the church as your mother it's a wonderful metaphor isn't it where you will be suckled and nourished and cared for and protected and looked after and so that it is wrong thinking and unbiblical thinking to imagine that you can be a Christian apart from the church fourthly go make disciples baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit and look at the fourth thing in verse 20 teaching them teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you now I call this the regulative principle there's a phrase about in reformed circles the regulative principle and it suggests that we cannot include anything in our worship service that is not expressly regulated and stated in the

Bible somewhere here's a really important regulative principle teaching them to observe all all all all I want you to notice the all in this great commission all authority all nations all that I have commanded you and with you always this statement of the great commission presupposes teachers it presupposes preachers it perhaps even presupposes in some church structure teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you the entire life of

Christ is our curriculum from that moment that he in chapter four of Matthew said repent for the kingdom of God is at hand all his actions all his example all his attitude all his words all his being a person that existed for others all his humiliation and humility all his sacrifice all all his zeal for God that's what the church needs to know about all the time that's what the church must never drift very far away from teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you says

Jesus Christ the head and lord of the church and I want you to notice that word observe to observe same word that was used of the Roman soldiers as they watched Jesus on the cross it means guard it means protect it doesn't just mean get the truth in here it means get the truth out in your life daily all the teaching then is to be Christologically based focused Christ and Christ is to be the model of the entire life of the church in its worship in its relations in its structure in its mission so we've looked at the mandate for the commission all authority has been given to me we've looked at the mission statement that comprises of four parts go make disciples baptizing them teaching them to observe all that

I have commanded you and I finish with this third part the marvelous assurance the it was great assurance anyway was it not hearing Jesus say all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me that was a wonderful assurance wasn't it but you know he finishes off with another wonderful assurance let me just read this now and behold I am with you always to the end of the age let me

just go through this verse with you this verse of marvelous assurance notice first of all the word behold this is the fifth time in this chapter chapter 28 the chapter of the resurrection that the word behold has been used the fifth time and from a literary point of view the word behold signals a surprising and important truth is about to be uttered that's the use the literary use of that word behold and there was a lot of surprising truths that came out in that chapter 20 but here's the fifth behold and behold

[36 : 00] I might be going away physically you might not see me physically again for a while but I am with you always in the actual Greek it doesn't use the word always guess what it says it's wonderful I am with you all the days praise God there's not a day Peter alluded to this in his prayer there is not a day no matter what you're going through no matter where you are and no matter who you are and what you are if you're a disciple of

Jesus Christ here is his guilt edged guaranteed promise to you I will be with you all the days but look at the very last words to the end of the age to the end of the age in the new testament there's only two if you like time zones there is this present age and there's the age to come the life everlasting and Jesus is saying this age for you often of blood sweat and tears this age for you of trial and sorrow and weeping

I promise you that I will be with you till the very last nanosecond of that age how do we respond to this great commission that's for each one of us to decide because as I close although the commission you might say was addressed to the eleven disciples or if you take the larger view that there were other disciples there other than the eleven and that is conceivably a possibility both groups are represented of of the people of

God and so that in a very real sense whenever you become a disciple you become involved in the great commission and may God give us renewed confidence and renewed faith to respond to this great commission in our day in our generation in our times that will bring glory to God and good to the people of our times amen you take out