

Great Commission Pt.1

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Preacher: Bill Love

[0:00] Amen. Again, it is a joy and blessing to be with all of you, for Karen and I to have been invited to come and be part of the resurrection of your annual parish retreat.

! I know we began in prayer this morning, but you can never pray too much. So let's continue with one more prayer. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for all our many blessings and gifts. We thank you, Lord, for delivering us safely through the night and bringing us here this morning.

We pray for safe travel for others who may still be en route. Lord, it's not by accident that we are here. We're here by your invitation.

We pray that you would guide and lead us in all that we do this day. We ask your special blessing and anointing upon the message that you have given us to share this day.

May your word and your word only be spoken and may your word and your word only be heard. In all things that we say and do, may it be to your honor and glory and the benefit of your church and your people.

[1:20] Come, Holy Spirit, come with mighty power. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay. Well, as you remember, last night we began, well, first of all, in case you've forgotten, the theme for our time together is Rooted in Christ, the keys to being faithful to God.

As I mentioned last night, there are any number of things that we could talk about in terms of keys to help us to be faithful to God, but we have decided on three specific keys.

And last night we focused on the first two. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength. And the second, to love our neighbor as ourself.

You might remember that last night we mentioned that Jesus, in John's Gospel, he said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

So this morning, we're going to be focusing on one of the ways that we carry out our love for our Lord. And that is through the Great Commission.

[2:40] The very last words that, that, or the very last message that Jesus had for the apostles, after his death and resurrection, we find in the Great Commission, as he was about to ascend back into heaven, and he invited the apostles to join him up on top of the mountain.

And there, he proclaimed to the eleven as they came up on the mountain, he said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Now go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, into the Son, into the Holy Spirit. Remembering that I will be with you always, even to the very end of the age.

Now let's think about it for a minute. Jesus knows that he is about to ascend to heaven. He has, for the past 30, 33 years, been on the earth, amongst the people at that time, taking our humanity upon himself, ministering to the folks, teaching them about God, revealing God in ways that the prophets of old could not have done, and, and just helping them to grow in, to grow in their faith, to come to know who God is and his love for them as so perfectly demonstrated or expressed through his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when he went to the cross to die for us, to pay the price that we're incapable of paying ourselves.

Jesus said, this is how much I love you. And, and he allowed himself to be nailed to the cross, to pay the price for our sins.

[4:44] And, he died for us. The good news is, he didn't stay dead. He rose to new life. And, he invites us into that, that new life.

And, that's what the Great Commission is all about, is helping the world know that there is a God, an almighty, all-loving God, that has not forgotten them, that has come to be amongst them, and,

and, has prepared a place for them, so that when, our life in this world, comes to an end, which it surely will for, every one of us, that that's not the end, but a glorious new beginning, in the near presence of God himself.

So, Jesus, up to this point, had, had been, teaching, the apostles, preparing them, for that which was to come.

And, now he was, in a sense, passing on the baton, that, that he was, entrusting to them, the message, that he had been sharing, the message, that the world, desperately needed to hear. He said, again, I want to do, this morning, similar to what I did last night, and as we, think about this passage, look at each section, and, and just, as we, meditate on it, and pray about it, to, to try to get a sense, of, of what God is, is really saying, in, in this.

[6:27] So, again, the very first thing, that he said, is that he brought them up, to, to give them, essentially, their marching orders, and through them, our marching orders, to let them know, that, that he, had the authority, to, say what he was about to say.

He said, all authority, in heaven, and on earth, has been given to me. all authority, God, the father, was pleased, with God, the son.

God, the son, had been faithful, to God, the father, even unto death, and, and as a result, he has, given, his son, our Lord, and savior, all authority.

In Paul's, in Paul's, letter to the Philippians, he, he speaks, a little bit about this, when, he says, therefore, God exalted him, to the highest place, and gave him the name, that is above, every name, that at the name, of Jesus, every knee, should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue, can acknowledge, that Jesus Christ, that is the Lord, to the glory, of God, the father.

Every knee, should bow, every tongue, confess, that Jesus Christ, is the Lord, to the glory, of God, the father. J.C. Ryle, in his commentary, on Matthew, he said, let us embrace, this truth, reverently, and cling to it, firmly, Christ, is the one, who has the keys, of death, and hell.

[8:38] He has all authority, to decide, our destiny. his desire, is for us, to follow him, to open our hearts, the souls, and minds, our entire being, to him, and to accept him, into every aspect, of our life, accepting him, as Lord, and Savior.

But he's also, given us, the ability, to choose, whether or not, we will receive, that gift of life, that gift of eternal life, that he promises.

To help us, in that choice, God is now, sending, the apostles, our Lord is sending, the apostles, out into the world, to let the world, know about him, about what they have, witnessed, those past three years, as they walked, with our Lord, and ministered, beside him, face to face, as they witnessed, his teaching, again, how he, how he, revealed, the truth of God, in ways, that all the prophets, before, had not been able, to fully do.

They had given us, glimpses of God, but here was God, incarnate, right there, in their midst, he said, Jesus said, everything that I say, to you, I only say, that which the Father, has given me, all that you see me do, is only that, which the, which the Father, has directed me, in doing, in essence, everything he was saying, everything he was doing, was, in total obedience, to, God the Father. So he was opening their eyes, to, to the love of God, he was opening, their, their minds, and their hearts, to, to the power of God, as they witnessed him, heal, the blind, heal, the lame, heal, the deaf, heal, the lepers, set those, who are demons, demon possessed, free, and even, raise the dead.

[11:06] In all of these ways, he was demonstrating, the, the power, the authority, that, that he had, to, minister to the people, and, and to, show how God was at work, in their very midst.

All authority, in heaven and on earth, has been given to me. So he has established, his, credibility, and the chiefly, he did that, by rising to, to life, after his death.

But now, he is going on to, all right, you all have witnessed, all of these things. Now, in my authority, the authority, that God the Father, has given me, I am sending you out, to continue the work, that I've begun.

The work, that, that must, continue, until I return again. So he, he says, therefore, go, and make disciples, of all nations.

He doesn't say, sit back, and wait for the people, to come and discover you. Isn't that one of the, great mistakes, that we make, within the church?

[12:34] We think, if we have a nice, pretty red door, out front, to grab people's attention, as they drive by, then that will just, draw them in. Tragically, far too often, the church, has waited, for the

world, to come, to the church.

But that's not, what our Lord commands. He commands us, to go into the world. He said, the night that he was, the night that he was, betrayed, before he was betrayed, he prayed, to God the Father, and he said, Father, just as you have, have sent me, into the world, I now send them, into the world. Speaking of the apostles, not to be, of the world, but to be, in the world. And, I ask your protection, over them. Again, our Lord, expects us, to be, in the world, in which we, find ourselves, but not to adopt, the ways of the world, but rather to go forth, in his name.

to be, a witness, to his reality, to be, a channel of his love, and mercy, and healing grace.

So, Jesus, in commanding them, in all authority, he commands them, to go. Don't just, sit here, and wait, for people to come.

[14:07] But rather, I am sending you, out now. I'm sending you, out now, with a specific message, and with a specific purpose.

And, in the going, he says, you are to go, and make disciples. Michael Green, one of the great theologians, of the church, he said that, that congregations, and clergy, in the west, seem committed, to maintenance, not mission.

Happily, however, churches, all over the developing world, are providing, a much needed, corrective. They show, a passionate desire, to fulfill, this last, command, of Jesus.

Again, one of the great tragedies, of the church, is that sometimes, we're satisfied, with maintenance. If we can just, keep the doors open, if we can keep the roof, from falling down, if we can, just maintain, enough people, to be able, to pay the bills, at least, until we die, then it's okay. That is, a horrible place, for the church, to be. That's not, what the Lord, was commanding. He was commanding, us to, to go out, and to make disciples.

[15:52] And what are disciples? Disciples are followers, of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, if you want to, truly be my disciple, then first, you must, be willing, to die to self.

You must, pick up your cross, and come, follow me. making disciples, is not, always an easy thing, and yet, that's exactly, what, our Lord, calls us to do.

Again, in the, Michael Green, he says, the Great Commission, includes, the baptism, and careful discipling, of new believers.

Matthew is not satisfied, nor is Jesus, satisfied, with any hasty, perfection of faith, and any, perfunctory baptism.

The apostles, are called, not to evoke decisions, but to, make disciples. And that is, an altogether, tougher, assignment.

[17:12] Backing, backtracking, for just a moment. When Jesus, sent them out, he didn't say, just, just go to the people, that you enjoy being with. Go to the people, that, that like you.

Go to the people, that won't be threatened, by the message, that you have to share. But rather, he said, go to all nations. All people.

Not just the folks, that you feel comfortable, being with. That's his command, to the church. You know, sometimes we think, that, that in order to, live out the great commandment, we have to go on, on overseas mission.

And certainly, there are those, who are called to that. And in fact, in many ways, when we go on, overseas mission, then that can, can help strengthen us, in our own face.

And because it challenges us, to step out of our comfort zone, and, and to be, and to see God at work, in ways that we might not, have seen him at work, in our normal day-to-day lives.

[18:18] But one of the, one of the mistakes, that we make, is we sometimes think, that the mission field, is somewhere over there. Well, while, there is a portion, of the mission field, over there.

One of the largest, mission fields, in the world, is right around us, in our own backyard. And sometimes, we find it, far more difficult, to, minister, to share the gospel, to the people, right in our own backyard, than we do, if we, we go over there.

Because it's, it's safe to go over, there somewhere, we go for a time, and then we leave. But when we, share the gospel, with the folks here, we're not leaving. And, and so there is, that element of, of, really having to be committed, to what we're doing, and not, and, and, not be afraid, to, really put it all, on the line.

To, to, let people know, who we truly are, and what we truly believe. Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me, then when I return, I'm going to be ashamed of you.

I don't know about you, but I don't want the Lord, to be ashamed of me. The Lord, calls us, not to live in fear, not to be ashamed of the gospel, but to proclaim the gospel, not to beat people up, over the head with it.

[19 : 57] We can't force our faith, on anyone, nor should we try. The church has attempted that, throughout the centuries, and it usually doesn't turn out well. But what we are called to do, is to, share our faith.

And as we talked about, last night, the two greatest commandments, that God has given us, is to love him, first and foremost, and to love our neighbor, as we love ourselves.

The, the sharing of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, is all about sharing, the love of God, with those that he sends us to, and those that he brings us to.

It's not about beating them up. It's about, we can't force people, into the kingdom. We're called to love them, into the kingdom. We're called to invite them, into the kingdom.

We're called to live our lives, in such a way, that when they see us, they see Christ within us, as Karen was talking about, so powerfully last night. We are called to, to live our life, in such a way, that it doesn't just blend in, with the ways of the world.

[21 : 13] But rather, to stand out, not pointing to ourselves, and say, look how great I am, how holy I am, but rather, trying to live our life, in such a way, that the light of Christ, that is within us, shines forth, and gets people's attention.

Drawing them, not to us, but drawing them to him. So again, as we go forth, in answering the Lord's call, to make disciples.

Yes, he calls us to go, to family and friends. But he calls us, to go beyond that. And then, to be courageous. Now, one of the passages, that has, been so, instrumental, and important to me, these past couple of years, as I have, been led down the journey, that I have gone, was a passage, from Joshua, in the first chapter, where, you might remember, Moses had died, and Joshua, was, entrusted by God, to, to lead, the Israelite people, across the river Jordan, into the promised land. Moses had gotten them, to the edge, but it was now, up to Joshua, to actually lead them, across. And there were, all sorts of unknowns, and things, that they were, fearful about.

And it could very easily, have, that the, the Joshua, and the Israelite people, could have very easily, said, well, it's not so bad here, where we are, let's just stay, where we are.

[22 : 54] But that's not, where God led them to. And, and, and, and God, speaking to Joshua, he said, be strong, and courageous. Be careful, to obey all the law, my servant Moses gave you.

Do not turn from it, to the right, or to the left. That you may be successful, wherever you go. Have I not commanded you, be strong, and courageous. Do not be afraid.

Do not be discouraged. For the Lord, your God, will be with you, wherever you go. Be strong, and courageous. The Lord calls us.

He wasn't just speaking, to Joshua. In essence, he was speaking, to every one of us. It is not easy, to live the Christian life. Because not everybody, wants to hear, what we have to share.

Despite the fact, that it's the greatest news, that anyone could ever hear. But they haven't been convinced of that. And tragically, many see the church, see Jesus Christ, as a threat.

[24 : 01] It takes courage, to speak up. And yet, the Lord calls us, to do that, to have that courage, to trust in him, to believe in him, to follow him, to obey him, as we carry out, these, this, our marching orders, that he gave us.

Go, and make disciples, of all nations. And again, as, as, Michael Green said, that's, that's easier said, than done. It's not just about, getting somebody, to make a quick profession, of faith, and then, continue on with their life, as if, they forgot what they just said.

But, but rather, helping to, really, raise them up, in the church. And, or to raise them up, in the faith. And that takes work. And it's something, that each one of us, need to be, continually working on, in our own lives.

We, by God's grace, we, have come to, to believe, in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So much so, that you got up early, on a Saturday morning, on a beautiful day, when you could have slept out, or gone out on the golf course, or, or wherever else, to come, and to, be with fellow brothers, and sisters in Christ.

The Lord, he calls us, to, go forth, in faith, and to, help people, grow, in their faith.

[25 : 41] To, to help them, truly become disciples. So much so, that they're willing, to die to self. So much so, that they're willing, to pick up the cross. Whatever that cross, might be.

That they're willing, to pay the price, whatever price, the world, might put upon them, as they live out, their faith. Knowing, that, that this life, is temporary.

That it won't last. Now, one of the, one of the missionaries, I can find it.

there was a, a Plymouth Brethren missionary, named Jim Elliott. Some of you, may have heard about Jim.

He, he died back in 1956, when he went to, to share the gospel, with folks in, in, in Ecuador.

[26 : 43] these were, unreached people, who every time, missionaries, had tried to go in, and share the gospel, they never came out alive. And, and yet, the Lord put it on his heart, to, to go, and to, try to share the gospel.

And, and he made the, he made the statement, that, that he is no fool, who gives, what he cannot keep, to gain, what he cannot lose. In other words, none of us can keep our, our lives, our physical lives.

And sometimes, we're fearful, of what others, might do to us, which keeps us, from, from, stepping out, and, and sharing the gospel.

He said, we don't need to worry, about what others, may do to us, because whatever they do, to us, they, we can't keep, our, our, our, our physical bodies.

At some point, we will lose it. But, what we can do, by living our life, the way that, that Christ calls us, to be faithful to him, to follow him.

[27 : 51] Then, then in fact, in, doing that, we can have, eternal life. Again, not, by what we do, because Christ, makes it possible, for us to have, eternal life.

But what we do, is a reflection, of our, faith in him. Jesus, Jesus, says to, to go, and to baptize, and not to baptize, in just any name, but to baptize, in the name, of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

You and I know, that, that we live, in a generation, we live in a time, in, in which, as we spoke about, last night, there are all sorts, of gods, that, that people, are worshiping, whether they realize, it or not.

And, and their, and the politically, correct thing, to, to believe, in this day and age, is, is that, essentially, all world religions, are the same.

That they all, if you're faithful, to whatever that faith is, then ultimately, you'll make it to heaven.

That's not what Jesus said. Jesus said, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

[29 : 13] No one comes to the Father, but through me. He could say that, because of that, which he, was to accomplish, on the cross.

The price, that he was to pay, the price, that had to be paid, in order for sin, to, to be conquered, in order for death, to be conquered, in order for us, to be set free.

Only Jesus, paid the price, that God requires, for salvation. No other God, of any religion, has accomplished, that which Jesus did.

It's not to say, that there may not be, some good teachings, from some of the, other world religions, but it is only in Christ, that salvation, that salvation, can be found.

And so Jesus, in commanding, the apostles, to go out, sharing, the good news, of who he is, and what he has accomplished, and the life, that awaits, those who believe in him, who trust in him, who follow him, he's saying, go, and baptize them, in the name, of the true God, the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[30 : 34] The Lord, calls us, to help, share that truth, and to have the courage, to have those conversations, with folks, who may think, that essentially, it doesn't matter.

And tragically, there are people, within the church, who think, it doesn't really matter. There are those, in the church, who don't really get, the importance, of the resurrection, and I'll be talking, about that, tomorrow morning, in our gospel passage.

Jesus said, it does matter. And it matters, into what face, we are baptized, and what name, we are baptized. All authority, in heaven, on earth, has been given to me, 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, and teaching them, teaching them, to obey, everything, that I have commanded you.

This is one of the areas, that the church, has failed miserably, in recent years, that we have failed, to teach, the faith, to help people, truly understand, understand, what it is, that we believe, and what it is, that the Lord, calls us to, the life that he calls us, to live, and the manner, in which he calls us, to live.

I'm convinced, that one of the reasons, that the world, is in the dire straits, it is in, that the church, especially within the west, is just disintegrating, around us, is that we have failed, in this part, of the great commission, we have failed, to faithfully, teach, the faith, to teach, God's holy word, and the scriptures, to teach, all that, that he commands, and, and to expect, that sense of, of obedience, but as we go forth, doing this, we need to remember, that we don't go forth, in our own strength, we don't go forth, in our own ability, we don't go forth, in our own wisdom, we go forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, we go forth, filled, with the power, of the Holy Spirit, the very last word, that Jesus said, before he, ascended into heaven, was remember,

[33:18] I will be with you, always, even, to the very end, of the age, Jesus, is a God, of his word, a Lord, of his word, in Matthew's gospel, in the first chapter, when, Mary is, visited, by the angel, Gabriel, actually, this is where, the angel Gabriel, is speaking, to Joseph, he says, that, all that took place, to fulfill, what the Lord, had said, through the prophets, the virgin, will conceive, and give birth, to a son, and they will call him, Emmanuel, which means, is God, with us, with us, with us, with us, in the very beginning, of the gospel, Jesus is identified, as, as, the coming of God,

God's presence, with his people, the very last remark, or the last statement, of our Lord, is his promise, to, to truly be, the Emmanuel, that, that, that God, is with us, he says, I am, I am the great, I am, I will be with you, to the very end, of the age, so as we try, to live out, the great commandment, and the great commission, as we, go forth, into the world, we do so, again, not in our own strength, in our own ability, but, but in the strength, the nobility, of God, of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the one in whom, all authority, on heaven and earth, has been given, he does not, command us, to do that, which he is not willing, to equip us for, which he is not willing, to empower us for, so often times, we fail to step out, because we can't see, beyond our own limitations, we can't, be set free, of our own fears,

Jesus said, don't be afraid, be courageous, knowing that I'm with you, I will be with you, all I ask is, that you be faithful to me, that you trust in me, that you open your hearts, and souls, and minds to me, that you involve me, invite me on the journey, and not try to do it, on your own, Charles Spurgeon, he was one of the, great theologians, of the 19th century, and in reference, to the great commission, he had this to say, and it's pretty harsh, he said, have you no wish, for others, to be saved, saved, then you are not, yourself, saved, be sure of that, what he is saying, is that unless, we have a burning desire, within ourselves, to truly, live out, the great commission, then we, have not, fully been, been, saved ourselves, because if we had, we would have, a love for people, who, who are destined, to, to, destined, to be separated, from God, for all eternity, if they don't come, to know, and believe, in Jesus Christ, and follow him, and accept him,

J.C. Ryle, said something similar, not quite as harsh, but essentially, to the same point, he said, that it may, may well be questioned, whether people, know the value, of the gospel, themselves, if they do not, desire to make it known, to all the world, dear friends, the gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ, is the greatest, gift, that we have, to share, with anyone else, what is it, that keeps us, from sharing it, what is it, that keeps us, stuck in our comfort zone, what is it, that, that, that gets in the way, of us answering, God's call, to go forth, into the world, making disciples, of all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them, all that he has commanded,

Michael Green said, that the great commission, is the response, to meeting the risen Christ, it is not until, the disciples, have personally met, with the risen Lord, that they are consumed, with the passion, to go, and tell others, if evangelism, is not, or if evangelism, is at a low ebb, in parts of the worldwide church, and it is, could it be, because many church goers, have never had, a personal, life changing, encounter, with Jesus, tragically, there are a lot of folks, who consider themselves, Christian, because they are Christian, in name only, they don't really believe, that God loves them, they don't really believe, that Jesus came, to save them, they don't really believe, in what Jesus did, on the cross for them, they don't really believe, that, that they have, a responsibility, to share, that blessing, that we have received, there are a lot of folks, who would say, that one of the things, that we desperately need, in this generation, is a revival, and I would agree,

[39:52] Stan Key, a dear friend, a Methodist, pastor, he said, that revival, some think, revival, is the, is the cause, of missions, perhaps the truth, is just the opposite, don't wait, for a visitation, of the spirit, to get involved, get involved, and then, see God move, Christ promised, his presence, to those who go, there's another, passage, that I have, but I can't find it, so, anyway, the Lord calls us, to go, not to, not to be stuck, in our comfort zone, not to wait, for the church, or for the world, to

