

“How to live out the Great Commission” Matthew 28:16–20

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Preacher: Matthew Usherwood

[0 : 00] First reading is from Ephesians chapter 3 verses 1 to 12.! It's taken from the English Standard Version and entitled, The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed.!

which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery, hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

So I don't know if anyone here is like me, but I always find when I go to say goodbye to someone kind of awkward.

[1 : 43] If I'm in a group setting, I find it awkward. Or when you're at like an event or someone's hosting something, in my mind I'm always kind of stressed when it's time to go and if I'm the first one to leave, I find it kind of stressful and I just feel a bit awkward at it.

That's something I've always had, something I probably always will have. And the text we're looking at today that Daniel read, it's the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew has written about the account of Jesus' life.

He's written it about Jesus being born, what Jesus did in his ministry. And now we come to the very end of Matthew's Gospel and Jesus is talking to his disciples.

And Jesus is about to ascend to heaven and he's giving us a final earthly address to his disciples. You think he would be giving a heartfelt goodbye.

You think it would be written here that Jesus, you know, hugged them, gave them a nice goodbye, pat on the shoulder and then gives the Great Commission. But he does not do that. I watch a lot of Netflix in my spare time when I have it.

[2 : 53] And something I've been waiting for, I believe over 10 years, is the ending of this show called Stranger Things. And the way they released the final season is they did it in parts.

And then the final episode, which is over two hours long, they released it on New Year's Eve. And in this episode, I'm going to try not to do any spoilers, literally half of the episode is people saying goodbye to each other, having these nice heartfelt moments, saying goodbye, and then it finally ends.

But Jesus does not do that here at all. There's no heartfeltness. There's no hugs. Jesus does something completely different. And what he does is he tells them a great truth.

And then he gives them a great command. And then he finishes by giving them a great promise, something to hold on to. But before we get into that, we need to set the scene. In verse 16, if you haven't turned already, turn to Matthew 28, verses 16 to 20.

It's the end of the Gospel of Matthew. And I'm going to read verse 16. Now, the eleven disciples, it was most likely the eleven and plus many other disciples, but it's focused in on the eleven disciples, went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

[4 : 10] Now, earlier in the chapter of 28, we have the account of the women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, going to the tomb of Jesus.

And an earthquake happens, an angel comes, it's rolled away the stone, and an angel appears to them and tells them, Jesus will go to Galilee, will meet them in Galilee, go and tell the disciples. Now, just a side note here. This is actually quite profound, that it's written that women were the first ones to discover the empty tomb, and then were the first ones to meet Christ on the way of going to tell the disciples.

This is something in that era that, if they wanted something to be truthful, they wouldn't include that. But here, they include it, because it actually makes it more truthful and more powerful, that it records that women are the first ones.

Because in that society, women were very degraded, they were only meant for a certain thing, and that was it. I know in our culture, it's very, we can't fathom that. That's how it was.

[5 : 15] So it makes this account even more truthful, that women are the first ones. Anyways, they're told to go and tell the disciples, and they go, and they're now in Galilee. But why Galilee?

I was thinking about this all week, and I had to look it up. Why not Jerusalem? Why not where Jesus was crucified? Why not at the center? Jerusalem at the time would have been like New York City of the Middle East.

In the Old Testament, there's accounts of God meeting his people on mountains. There's that account. Galilee is the region that Jesus did most of his ministry.

In verse 10, it's fulfillment of verse 10. It was also familiar to, it was a beloved place for his disciples, his followers. And it was less a chaotic setting.

So Jesus meets them and tells them this great truth up on the mountain. So we have the setting.

And then we look at verse 18. We're going to jump a bit because I'm going to come back, I'm going to circle back.

[6 : 15] So in verse 18, Jesus came and said to them, Now what does he mean by that?

Before, it's actually almost 10 years ago now, before I got into ministry, I was a photojournalist. I was a professional photographer for over a decade. And I got the opportunity to be, one of the biggest events of the year at the time, of one of the years I was a photographer, was that the company I did a lot of work for, was they brought Obama to the Canadian Tire Centre.

And they hired me to be the head photographer over many other photographers to cover the event. Because if you've been to the arena, it's quite big. It was a big event at the time.

And they put me in charge of a photo team. And I had all authority to decide where of the areas to place them to cover the event. Maybe some of you here are in positions of power that where you're over people, or you have power of influence.

But nothing can compare to what Jesus just said here. How all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Nothing can compare to this. Because what he's talking about is that he has been made Lord.

[7 : 34] Because he went to the cross, he died and rose again. God the Father has made him Lord. This shows us a very important thing.

This shows us Christ's deity, that he is fully God. That he is equal with the Father, but subordinate to the Father. The Father is always over him.

And another side note, verse 16 kind of shows us Jesus' humanity. Because he sends his disciples to a place that he obviously would have been very fond of in Galilee.

That's where he did his ministry. Sends them to a place where the disciples would have been more comfortable. Would not have been, they would have been less afraid of being caught. And then verse 18 shows us his deity.

Fully man and fully God. Because of the cross, Jesus has been made Lord of all. And what this means, the ascension that's about to happen is such an important thing that we often, not neglect, but we don't really talk about too much.

[8 : 43] Because we're always focused on the cross, the resurrection. The ascension is such an important thing. Because when Jesus ascends to heaven, it says in the other gospels, he's put at the right hand of God.

Now in a royalty setting, a monarchy setting, the right hand of the king is a power of great privilege. It's a position of great authority.

It's a great honor position. And he sits down beside the father on his right hand. And this signals that Jesus is the one who can speak to the father on our behalf.

He is the one that mediates for us. He is the one that intercedes for us. He is the one that saves us. Nothing else saves us. Nothing else we can do in this life will ever save us unless we come to and put our faith in Christ.

And he comforts us because he's the great high priest. In Hebrews, Hebrews has this profound section in chapter 4, verses 14 to 16.

[9 : 49] it says this, Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.

Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace and help in time of need.

This shows us that we can come to Christ, the high priest, and we can show, we can talk to him in prayer because prayer is such an important thing in the life of a disciple of Christ.

Christ, we come to him and we can, it actually, the prayer actually strengthens our faith. There may be times where you pray and you feel like God's not listening or is God even there.

[10 : 58] He is there and he listens to us and Jesus tells us a great promise later on about this.

And because of this, that Jesus has all authority in heaven on earth, we can now look at verses 19 to 20, at the beginning of verse 20.

Because Jesus is, he is Lord of all. In verse 19, it says this, 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.

A common critique of Christianity is that, you hear it a lot actually in the media now, that it is a white man's religion. And in one sense, that is a fair critique if you only look at it from a Western mindset in a North American setting.

If you look at the history, there is some of that. But in a greater sense, it's completely false. And this shows us right here that it's completely false. because it says, go and make disciples.

So Jesus is commanding them, tells them the great power that he has, and he sends them out, gives them the great commission. And this great commission signals that they are to go.

[12 : 21] Now this doesn't mean that we must go off to far off lands. People are called to do that. But we're not all called to do that. We are called, as followers of Christ, to go.

So that means to go into every area of our lives, to where we go to work, to where, how we speak with people.

We are to bring the gospel to light in those settings. To go and make disciples. And a disciple is someone who has put their faith and trust in Christ.

It's a call for us to mentor each other, to speak to each other, to ask each other how we're doing, to talk to people who do not know Jesus, not to silo ourselves, but to go off into the world to be a light within the world.

And when it says all nations, here we see that this is not just a white man's religion. Because all nations means a worldwide thing. Not just a certain nation. It's not, Christianity is not a religion that you assimilate to to look more like a certain culture or a certain nation.

[13 : 33] That's the beauty of the church. When we look around, we can see other nationalities. We can, we can, only the church shows that the true, what heaven is going to look like.

That there's other nationalities when we look around. That's the beauty of the church. You won't see this anywhere else. You see the rich with the poor. You see people with mental problems, with people with not mental problems coming together to worship the Lord.

And it's not a calling to be a certain nation. It's a calling to be holy. For God is holy. To be God's people, not a nation's people, but God's people.

But then it says to baptize. What does that mean? See, the thing of baptism, I'm not going to get too much into it because sometimes it's controversial.

But it's faith that saves you. You become a disciple of Christ and you follow him. And then baptism enters you into the visible church. We prayed the colic of circumcision of Christ and it talks about how the spirit circumcises your heart.

[14 : 40] When you put your faith and trust in Christ, what this colic is saying is that the spirit does all the work to, in a sense, take the veil off your eyes and show you the risen Lord.

And that gives you the faith. It's given to you. And then baptism is an outward sign, a seal that you've entered the visible church. And then it says teach them to observe all that I've commanded you.

Earlier in Matthew, there's the famous Sermon on the Mount. But Jesus gives commands in there. You can go back at another time and read that and reflect on it and see what areas that you need to follow it more or to teach other people.

See, God cares about your heart and your willingness to follow Christ and serve him. But you might be thinking, I've never made a disciple. I've never baptized someone.

What does that mean for me? Am I not following out the Great Commission? Am I failing as a follower of Christ? What does that mean for me? What that means is that no, you're not failing.

[15 : 47] What God puts before you, just be faithful with what you have before you. It doesn't mean you are lesser than if you've never led someone to Christ. But as we enter the new year here at Messiah West, what does that mean for Messiah West?

What can we bring to Messiah West into the Canada community? What does that mean for you? How are you going to live out the Great Commission in your life? Are you going to bring, are you going to be more open about the gospel and your work?

Am I going to be more open about that I'm a minister, that I'm an Anglican minister? Because it's so easy to shy away from it. But now let's jump up to verse 17.

Because there's something interesting here I want to talk about. Look at verse 17. And when they saw him, that is Jesus, they worshipped him.

But some doubted. What does that mean? Something that I'm very passionate about when I was younger, especially more, but very passionate about rock climbing.

[16 : 54] Mainly outdoor rock climbing. And I've been doing it for well over 15 years. And in rock climbing, when you climb up a cliff, you use a rope, and then there's things put in the rock that you clip to, and that protects you from falling and hitting the ground.

And you need to trust this system, that everything's going to work, the rope is going to hold you, your harness is going to hold you, the bolt in the rock is going to hold you. But there's still days, even after 15 years, that I'll go outside and I'll feel sketchy on it, or I'll feel like the system is not going to hold me.

I think we all can relate in a sense that as we walk this Christian life, being a disciple of Jesus, there's days where doubt creeps in, into our lives.

When we wake up, maybe some days our faith feels very shaky or weak or sketchy, in a sense. But that's the calling of the Christian life, being a disciple. It's not always these mountaintop experiences.

It's these experiences where we may be in the pits, feeling dark and lonely and alone completely. See, life is messy.

[18 : 08] But the thing is that's important here, that I think about this, about the Christian life, about how you can doubt while you worship Christ, is that it's what you do in these moments of doubt.

Are you consumed by your doubt? And do you let it pull you away from the church? Or do you worship regardless of your doubt? As you see in the Psalms, all through the Psalms.

Or one of my favorite lines in Job is that, though he slay me, I will hope in him. What do you do in these moments of doubt? What do you do in the moments of living out the Great Commission?

We see in this text that Jesus never says goodbye. He never says goodbye to them. But he says something way more profound. He says something so profound to them. He promises something to them in the last verse, the second half of the last verse, in verse 20.

He says this, And behold, I am always with you to the end of the age. What's constantly repeated during the Advent season, you hear it all the time, is God with us, Emmanuel.

[19 : 19] Emmanuel. In Isaiah, it's prophesied that the one who is born will be called Emmanuel, God with us. And then Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, begins, in chapter 1, verse 23, begins with that, quoting Isaiah, God with us, Emmanuel.

And then Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, ends with Jesus saying, I am always with you, to the end of the age. The Christ, Jesus, is promised to be always with you, no matter what you go through in this life.

As we live out the life of a disciple of Christ, we need to hold on to this great truth. We need to hold on to the truth that he is always with us. As we live out the Great Commission, we need to hold on to the truth that he is always with us, to the end of the age.

And this is all possible, because of the work that has been done on the cross. That Jesus went to the cross for us, not for himself, but for us.

And he died for us. And then he rose again for us. All power has been given to him in heaven and on earth. We have this great Savior, the Lord of everything, who is with us constantly.

[20 : 42] When we face moments of doubt, when we feel like we haven't lived up to the Great Commission, remember, Jesus is always with you. He's always with you.

And if you are here and you're struggling with faith or trying to understand what Christianity is, I would encourage you to press in more. Ask more questions. Ask more questions.

Ask people questions. Ask the Bible questions. Because the Bible, Christianity, can stand up on its own. It doesn't need people to give these grandiose explanations.

There's a reason why it's been around for over 2,000 years. There's a reason why, through history, it has changed the world and shaped it. There's a reason for that.

And that is because all authority has been given to Christ on earth and in heaven. So as we close, I'll say it again. As we enter the new year, as we reflect on the Great Commission, what does that mean for Messiah West and what does that mean for you and me as we move forward into the year?

[21 : 48] I put that question out to you and I put it out to myself as well. as well as