

Our Great Commission

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Date: 20 November 2022

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[0 : 0 0] continue to send out those who would bring the gospel to the nations. And so today we are looking at Jesus's words here at the end of Matthew chapter 28, giving the church this commission to bring the gospel to the nations. And before we jump into this text, by way of introduction, I want to really mention the foundation that this commission really rests on. And it rests on some earlier words of Jesus that are found earlier in the book of Matthew and Matthew chapter 16, specifically verse 18. But I'm going to read verses 13 through 20 for us. And this is where Jesus is with his disciples. He's been traveling around. He's about to tell them that he's about, he's going to be going to Jerusalem where he will die on the cross. And he has this conversation with his disciples. Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the son of man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them, but who do you say that I am?

And Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven. And this is the key verse, verse 18. And I tell you, you are Peter.

And on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. Now, some of these words are often, they seem mysterious to those who are reading this passage and they're thinking, you know, Jesus just declared, yes, you're right. I am the Christ. I am sent from my father. I am going to be building my church. But then he gives these words to his disciples of don't go and tell anyone that he's the Christ. How does that make any sense, Jesus? And ultimately this for Jesus was a timing issue.

And he is going to now give this great commission at the end of the book of Matthew, where he is specifically telling his disciples, now is the time to go to all of the nations. Now is the time to be proclaiming me as the Christ, to be going and sharing this message of the gospel.

It was not back in Matthew chapter 16. However, this foundational sentence that I will build my church, that is the key part in Jesus's words in Matthew chapter 16. Upon this confession, that Peter makes that you are the Christ, the son of living God, that rock, that foundational statement of who Christ is, Jesus is going to build his church. And ultimately the gates of hell will not be able to stand against the church. They cannot win this battle. And so that's the good news as we begin to look at this gospel, at this great commission of taking the gospel to the nations from Matthew chapter 28.

And I want to look at four things today. There are four M's. I suppose we could have called this message the M&M's of the great commission. But there are four, four words here that I think ultimately stand out that lead us to understanding better this great commission and applying it in our own life. And the first one is the master, the master who gives this commission.

[3 : 3 5] We see this in these first few verses. Oftentimes we start reading the great commission in chapter in verse 19. I think that's a little bit premature, actually. I think we should back up to verse 16 and get the full context of what is happening as Jesus gives this commission. So what's happening here, these 11 disciples, that's the remaining group minus Judas, these 12 who had followed Jesus.

They go to this mountain where Jesus has told them to go. He's told this to the women. He's revealed himself to the disciples at this point. He's been on earth for, you know, somewhere close to 40 days. This probably happened just before the ascension, somewhere around there. And so it's been almost 40 days since the resurrection. And it says in verse 17, I think this is this verse has always stood out to me as pretty profound. It says, and when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted.

And I just think that these closest followers of Jesus who have witnessed miracle after miracle after miracle of Jesus, they watched him walk on the water. They watched him, you know, raise a little boy from death to life. They watched him call Lazarus out of the grave. They watched him heal lame person after lame person, blind person after blind person. They watched him do all of these great things.

And then they saw him beaten by the Romans. They saw him hung on a cross and they saw him die. And now they've seen the risen Lord in the flesh. And yet we still get to this passage and it says they worshiped him. They know who he is. And yet still some doubted. There was still a little bit of doubt in their hearts. And I just say that by way of encouragement to us. When we find ourselves in these places where we might be doubting the promises of Jesus, we need to remember who this master is that gives us this great commission. He is the one who the father has given all things. He is the one who, uh, who he's about to say, I have all authority in heaven and on earth. Uh, think back to Psalm chapter two. This is one of the great messianic Psalms, Psalm chapter two in verses seven and eight. It says, I will tell of the decree. The Lord said unto me, you are my son. This is essentially God speaking to, uh, about the son, uh, Jesus. You are my son today. I have begotten you ask of me and I will make the nations, your heritage and the ends of the earth, your possession. The father has made the nations, Jesus's inheritance. He has given Jesus all of these things. That is the one who is giving us this commission to go and to make disciples of all the worlds. And so I think it's incredibly important that we recognize and understand who this master is that is giving us these words. Even these closest followers of Jesus struggled. Even these closest followers of Jesus had had some doubt in their life, despite seeing him die and seeing him raised from the dead. And so we should remember that, that we are not alone in this battle of taking the gospel to the nations.

[6 : 36] Jesus is there with us. That's certainly jumping ahead to the, the last verse. Jesus is right there with us. He is going to be with us to the ends of the age. And we have churches across this nation and ultimately across this world who are engaged in this battle with us to bring the gospel to all of the nations. So first we must recognize the authority of this master who gives us this commission, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. And that is why he can say to his disciples what he's about to in verses 19 and 20. So the second thing that we see in this passage is the mandate that is given. So we have the master and now we have the mandate. And it's important to not miss what the mandate in these verses is. Now I am not going to give a Greek lesson in this message, but it is important to understand what words are the imperative is the imperative verb and what words are not the imperative verb in this passage. And so an imperative verb, you, you know what these are. These are the things that parents like to give the children, take out the trash, feed the dog.

You know, these are the commands. So that's what we're going to see. There's one of those in all of these verses that we have just read. And that is the verb make disciples. That is the command. That is the mandate of these verses to make disciples of all the nations. And so let's look at what that is and what making disciples ultimately involves. Jesus gave us a perfect picture of how to do this in his earthly ministry. He spent essentially three-ish years calling 12 people to follow him closely. He had within that group of 12 people, he had three that were very close to Peter, James, and John. They followed him places that the other nine did not. And they got to witness up close and personal. They were the only ones that saw the, you know, the little girl raised from the dead. He left the other disciples out. They were the only ones who got to see Jesus transfigured up on the mount when, when he was transfigured and stood and heard the words of God speaking to him, telling him, this is my son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. And so Jesus gave us a picture of what it looks like to make disciples. And ultimately what that is, it is to spend time, time, time, time, and more time with these people that we are sharing the gospel with.

It's inviting them into your life. It is sharing your life with them, letting them witness the ups and the downs, the good times where it's easy to follow Jesus and the hard times where it's difficult to follow Jesus and to witness all of those things in your life. The disciples got to see Jesus when he was worn out and weary and he just needed to take a step back and get away and pray to his father. They also got to see Jesus do amazing things and amazing miracles. And so the disciples got to witness Jesus's life for three years. And that is what disciple making ultimately looks like, inviting someone to be a part of your life and discovering the word of God, discovering who Jesus is with them. It involves time and lots of time, but no less than that. And there are lots of ways that can be

done. Jesus ultimately did it with kind of a, he had this kind of four-step process. He, first through the gospels, I remember my, my, oh goodness, what was the, my biblical interpretation teacher taught us this. He had this kind of fourfold method. First it was come and watch what I do.

[10:29] And then it was come and help me do what I do. And then it was, let me help you do what I've been doing. And then it was go do what I do. And we saw this progression with the disciples through the gospel. First, it was just come and observe. Then it was come and participate a little bit. Then he, he goes and he sends them out with his help. And finally, he now is sending them to say, okay, you know, I'm, I'm going to be with you, but it's ultimately your responsibility now to go and make disciples among the nations. And so it's, it's teaching new believers how to do that same thing in our own lives. Paul was a great example of this. And he wrote in his last letter, uh, second Timothy, he wrote to Timothy and he gave them kind of what, what is often known as the four generations of discipleship. And in second Timothy chapter two, verse two, he said this, he says, what you have heard from me and the presence of many witnesses in trust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. And what we see, there's four generations of Bible teaching happening.

Paul we have as generation one. And so he writes to Timothy who is generation two, what you have heard me teach you in the presence of many faithful witnesses and trust to faithful men. So that's generation three, teach other people who will ultimately then be able to teach others. Also, that's what making disciples look like is disciples reproducing other disciples. Uh, there was no option that Jesus gave his followers to come and be one of his disciples and not be a fisher of men, uh, to not be a disciple maker. Uh, that was expected of all of those who would follow after him. Uh, and, and, you know, we could look all through the gospels to find evidence for this, but, um, I encourage you as you're reading the gospels, look, uh, at those commands and when he calls new followers, what he tells them to do. So it's to live our lives entirely for Christ to open up our lives and invite, uh, invite people to see how we are living our lives, see how we're reacting in difficult times, see how we're reacting, uh, when we receive the bad news that the family member is dying of cancer to, to see what it's like when we're elated and we get to see one of our, our children trust and obey the gospel for the first time to, to be able to witness all of those things. Uh, you can do it with your coworkers.

You can do it with friends or family members. Certainly we do it with our children, uh, as godly parents, uh, instructing them and showing them what the gospel looks like as we live out our lives. And that is the mandate of this great commission to go, uh, to, to make disciples of all the nations. Now, the second part of our little mini Greek grammar lesson, uh, it relates to the third point. So we have the master of the mandate and third is the method that Jesus has given us. Thankfully, Jesus did not simply give us this command to go and make disciples of all the nations. Uh, that's a pretty phenomenal task. When we think about all the peoples of the earth, go and make disciples of all those people. When you think about what that entails, the thousands and thousands of people groups, you know, there's, you know, approximately 6,000 or so, maybe 7,000 people groups that don't even know who Jesus is today. Uh, but when we think about the enormity of this command that we are to take the gospel message to all of these people, uh, it seems like a, an impossible task. And yet Jesus did not simply give us the command with no guidance. He gave us the method to employ in making these disciples. Uh, this is like I said, this is the second part of our little Greek lesson here. There are three present active participles in the Greek. Uh, and these are ING type words. Uh, these are words like, well, the ones we're going to see going, baptizing, and teaching. Uh, and now oftentimes our translation, and even in fact, I'm not seeing any translation that doesn't translate the first word go. Uh, but the better translation for this word is probably actually, as you are going, make disciples of all the nations. It is a present active participle. It's meant to not just be this one thing that we do, not this one trip that we go on, uh, not this, uh, one time event, but rather it's a present active. That means it's an action that starts and it continues to happen, uh, in a repetitive ongoing manner. And so as we are going and what this most likely was understood from Jesus's disciples is as we are going about our life, you know, we're going to, we're going to be living our life after Jesus is ascended. We're going to be starting churches. We're going to be preaching the gospel in Jerusalem. Jesus no doubt probably knows that a persecution is going to, uh, to come upon the church. They're going to be scattered. Uh, people are going to be scattered to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth ultimately. Uh, and as they are going, they are to bring this message of Christianity with them there to be, to, to be packing up and moving to, to be going about

their business, to be going into the market, to be going to, to Walmart and Kroger. And, you know, it's not

[15 : 33] Kroger here in Colorado. It's King super, I guess, but, uh, you know, there to be, as they are living their life, be bringing this message of the gospel with them. Uh, that is step one of the method is going. And so as we find ourselves going about our life, whether that is, uh, near our home, maybe we will pack up one day and be going to Africa or the Middle East or Asia or South America, wherever it is, we find ourselves going. We're to be bringing the gospel message with us and making disciples. Now I heard this story many years ago. I heard it when I was in high school.

And I think at that point it was like 30 something years old, but a story is told that I thought it just illustrated this point perfectly. Uh, it happened down in Florida, off the coast of Florida.

And what happened was there were these two brothers who had taken out a, a small sailboat. Uh, and they were, they were going out and like one of the boys was a teenager. One of them was a little bit younger, maybe also a young teenager. And they had taken out this sailboat like they had done many times before. Uh, and as they were out sailing, they were having fun, but pretty soon, as can happen, storms can come in pretty quickly, uh, in the ocean. And so that's exactly what happened. A storm began to blow in and the waves began to get really choppy and the wind began to get a pretty erratic and they're off the coast a little ways. And, uh, and, uh, and things started looking really bad, really fast. Uh, people out on the shore, they began to kind of see this boat struggling out there and bobbing up and down. And pretty soon they saw this boat capsize.

Uh, it flipped upside down just with all the waves and everything going on. And, you know, two relatively, you know, young people who were captaining the boat. Uh, and what happened was the, the older brother was able to, to get out and swim, uh, swim away from the boat. He caught on to, um, uh, to some debris, some kind of a life raft or something. Uh, but his other brother, uh, came up way, uh, pretty, pretty far out. Uh, he was carried by some waves and, and came up way over on the other side, uh, of this boat. Uh, there was nothing for him to hang on to, uh, and no way for him to, he was, he was really struggling. And so this older brother, uh, saw his younger brother over there and he, he said, you know, little brother, this way, little brother, uh, this way, come over here. And he began to shout to his younger brother.

Meanwhile, the, the rescuers have seen this boat and they start to prepare a rescue boat and get out there. Uh, the little brother is over here swimming and he's struggling really hard. Uh, and the waves at this point, they're, they're really choppy. They'll splash over him and he comes down and he pops back up and, uh, he, he gets knocked down again. And pretty soon he's spluttering back up and just working as hard as he can to get over to his older brother. Meanwhile, his older brother is just screaming with all of his mind, this way, little brother, swim harder. You're almost here.

[18 : 36] Swim harder. You're almost here. His little brother swims and swims and he does the best that he can. But pretty soon a wave comes over this little brother and he never comes back up again. And when the rescuers get there, they saw this older brother hanging onto his life preserve with his arms down into the water saying, swim harder, little brother, swim harder. You're almost here. But his little brother didn't make it. And when I heard that message that I heard that story the first time I thought that is exactly what the church is doing. So many times we are like this older brother saying, you know, we have the message of the gospel.

Lost people just come this way. We have the message of the gospel. Lost people just come this way. And lost people are out here. They're living their lives and they're struggling. They don't understand the gospel. They don't have a relationship with Christ. They may not have the Bible. They may not have one that they read regularly. And so they don't know the truth and they are finding their way through life and they're getting knocked down and they're rising back up and they're getting knocked down. All the while the church has the answer over here. We have the gospel message. And I thought to myself when I heard that story, you know, I've got three little siblings, you know, many of you probably have siblings. And I just thought, you know, why didn't he leave his his little life reserve and go get his little brother and drag him to safety? And too often we as the church, we we stay in our walls and we stay in our groups and we don't go out to rescue the lost that Jesus has put in front of us. We don't bring out the message of the gospel so that they can hear it. Those are the means that God has appointed for lost people to come to him is the church going with this gospel message. And I hope that that we might see from this passage and see in our own lives opportunities where we can leave our safe places, our life reserves and our life reps, and that we might be able to go out with the gospel message taking it to the lost who are out there

struggling. They're drowning and they just need this message of the truth that Christ wants. You know, the Bible tells us that that God is not willing that any should perish. His desire is that all should come to repentance. And so we should sow that message of the gospel widely, expecting him to draw those who are his to himself.

So that is going. The second thing in this method is to be baptizing. So as we are going, we make disciples, we we teach them the gospel. And as they trust in Christ, we're to be baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit. What that does is it helps them to identify to the world that they now belong to Christ. It's it's it's the it's them saying, I now belong to Jesus. He is my Lord and I am following him. We're going and we're baptizing and we're teaching. That's the third step of the method going, baptizing and teaching. And notice, you know, sometimes we can get caught up with just teaching facts and figures and and things like that. But ultimately, what is it that we're supposed to be teaching? Notice what Jesus says in verse 20 here, teaching them to obey or observe all that I have commanded you. We're to teach them the law of God. That's what you know what we do when we when we have our our time where we've been having we've been having the confession. We've been reading through the Ten Commands. We've been reading through this moral law of God that he has given that is unchanging from before all of eternity through through the time where this world will pass away and we'll have the new heavens and new earth. These are the things that do not change culture to culture, people to people. They are God's will and God's moral law. We see that throughout the Old

Testament, we see Christ repeat it in the Gospels. And that is what we are to be teaching as we are going and making disciples. Teach them the law and the Gospel. And not just simply memorize, you know, memorize the order of the books of the Bible, you know, memorize these things, but teach them to obey the Gospel and the law that he has given. We're called to teach obedience to all that Christ has commanded. So we have this master, this great master who is Jesus, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, who God is, who God the Father has given as the inheritance of all the peoples of the earth. We have the mandate to make disciples of all the nations.

And we have this method of how to do it. So by going, not staying, but by going and baptizing and teaching. And last, what we see in this passage, it's somewhat assumed, but it's part of this teaching them to obey all that I've commanded, is the message. What is this message that we should be taking to the nations? And ultimately, that is the Gospel. Ultimately, that is all that we have contained within God's Word. We're to teach the full spectrum of God's Word, not to hunt and pick the things that we prefer over other passages, but the full gamut of God's Word is what we are to take as our message to the nations. We're to teach the truth of God's Word, the unaltered, undistorted truth of the entirety of the law and the Gospel. But also, we are to teach this truth in love. Sometimes, the church can probably, in good and well-meaning ways, we can be somewhat jerks, for lack of a better word. That is never the method that Christ encourages throughout all His Word. Rather, what He says is, those who will persecute you, you're supposed to pray for them. Those who would take from you, you're supposed to give them more. Those who would hit you, you're supposed to let them hit you again.

[25 : 04] And so, we're not to take the truth in a hateful, ungodly, unwinsome way, but rather, we're to take the truth in love with grace, just as Jesus did. He was full of grace and truth.

And we should do that same thing. There's one other passage in Matthew that I want to look at as we close.

And this is ultimately just before Jesus' arrest and His crucifixion, His death. It comes from Matthew chapter 24. This is another, just as I spoke about yesterday morning, this is another one of those assurances that this is what is going to happen. We can be assured that the Great Commission will succeed. God's mission will not fail. And we see that once again in yet another passage in Matthew chapter 24. I'm going to read verses 3 through 14. It says this, As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to have privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be? And when will the sign of your coming in the end of the age?

And Jesus answered them, See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ. And they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place. But the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

[26 : 51] All of these are the beginning, all of these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up for tribulation and put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for My namesake.

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 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. And then the end will come. Ultimately, Christ's return, the end of this age, will not come until the gospel has made its way to all of the nations.

And that should give us encouragement that we will indeed succeed. I think it should be our prayer as the church, not just this local church, but the kind of big C, capital C church, that that might be able to happen within our lifespans.

[28 : 07] That we might be the generation that is able to take the gospel to all of the nations and make disciples of all of the nations so that Christ might return.

So that we might be able to see Him and behold Him face to face. That we might get to witness the new heavens and the new earth as He recreates this world.

But until the church accomplishes its mission, until ultimately Christ accomplishes His mission through the church, because remember He said, I will build my church.

Until Christ accomplishes His mission through the church, it is our job to be obeying this great commission. To go and to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for your word here. Father, we are thankful that you have given us your word, that you have left it recorded in our Bibles for us to be able to read, and made it very accessible to us who are able to speak the English language.

[29 : 27] Father, we pray that your word might continue to multiply into languages that do not yet have it. That we might be able to take a part in getting your word into a new language, so that people can know who you are and read these great truths about you and your Son and your Holy Spirit.

Father, I pray that you would use us, use the people who are part of this gathering and this church, to be your agents in making this great commission come true, to make disciples of all the nations. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.