Matthew 28:16-20

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Preacher: Rev. Jordan Senner

[0:00] Father, thank you for this rich heritage and faith that you have given us. That you have revealed yourself to us in the Lord Jesus.! That you have poured out the Holy Spirit upon us so we can proclaim, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

We thank you that your glory fills the whole earth. And we pray now that you would help us to hear Jesus clearly, to love him fully, and to obey him and follow him passionately, we pray.
In Jesus' name, Amen. You may have a seat and open up to Matthew, chapter 28. Ah, it's a very familiar passage, often known as the Great Commission.
We're taking a little break from the book of Acts because it is Trinity Sunday, and this is the passage that the church around the world is reading and preaching on this Sunday.
And it's a moment at the very end of the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus gives the church its mission, its marching orders. He says to his disciples, Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
[1:18] It's a really great reading for Trinity Sunday. Because did you notice how it says, In the name, there's one divine name. And yet, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there's three persons.

So in that creed, how we were doing one, one, one, not three, all the time. And then we were saying, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three, but they're one. We're going back and forth between oneness and threeness.
Well, it's right here in Matthew 28. We are baptized into one name because there's one God. And yet, that one God is three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And the Christian life here by Jesus is depicted as a full immersion into the personal life of the Holy Trinity. It's a beautiful thing. But there's a problem with the Great Commission, is that for us, it's too often taken out of context.
And when it's taken out of context, I think it loses a little bit of its luster because we end up focusing a lot on what we are to do as a church and disciples and lose the focus on what Jesus has done and what he will do.
[2:22] So what I want us to do is recontextualize the Great Commission. Let's take a look at what comes before and after it. So three points to the sermon. Jesus makes a great claim.

That's point number one. Point number two, Jesus gives a great commission. And point number three, Jesus provides great comfort. So great claim, great commission, great comfort.
Do you think we can follow that? Is that going to be all right? Okay, let's do it. Let's get into it. The great claim that Jesus makes. Verse 18. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
And the question is, when was all authority given to Jesus? And here, I think this particular reference is a reference to on the day of his resurrection. On the day of his crucifixion, Jesus canceled the record of our sins on the cross.
He disarmed the power of sin so that sin no longer has the authority it once did. He disarmed the power of Satan so Satan no longer has the authority that he once had.
[3:31] And he disarmed the power of evil on the cross so that evil no longer has the authority that it once had. And then on Easter Sunday morning, he declares that he has defeated death and death no longer has the finality that it once had.

And so I think here, when Jesus says, all authority has been given to me, he is referencing his resurrection where he is declared as Lord, that nothing, everything Satan could do, everything the evil of the world could do, everything our sin could do, and everything the death itself could do could not hold Jesus down.
It was not powerful enough to defeat him. And so on Easter Sunday morning, Jesus says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

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And did you notice how the way Jesus phrases this reflects the very first verse of the Bible? What's the very first verse of the Bible? In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
I think there are two people that know that verse. That's great. God created the heavens and the earth. And then Jesus is here saying, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
[4:44] There is one Dutch politician who put it this way. He said, there's not a square inch in the whole entire domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not say mine.

Jesus has laid claim to every inch of creation. And that means that to be a Christian is first and foremost and foundationally and fundamentally to acknowledge the breadth and the scope and the depth of Jesus' absolute authority.
No one has more power than him and no one has power over him. To be a Christian is to acknowledge the fact that Jesus is Lord and that means I am not. To be a Christian is to acknowledge the fact that not only is Jesus as Lord worthy of all my praises, but he is worthy of my humble and faithful obedience to him.
To be a Christian is to acknowledge that not only should I bring all my prayers and my needs and my petitions to Jesus, but he is worthy of all my reverence and adoration because he has all authority.
It has been given to him. That is the great claim that Jesus is making. And without this great claim, I want to suggest that Jesus' great commission would hold no weight in the world.
[6:02] Because the only reason disciples of Jesus have any right to make disciples of other nations is because Jesus is the Lord of other nations.

He is Lord. So that leads us to our second point. Jesus gives a great commission that is predicated upon his great claim to have all authority. Notice in verse 19 how the second word is therefore.
It's because he has all authority that he says go and make disciples of all nations. And I love this. Jesus gives us razor sharp purpose to our lives.
If you're wondering what is the purpose of my life, Jesus is giving it to you. There's a vocational focus and a missional clarity to what he is teaching us here. Did anybody ever ask you what you wanted to be when you grew up?
Is that a question? Do you find yourself asking kids that sometimes? There's this innate sense, I think, in our culture that when kids grow up, we want to encourage them to wonder, what am I going to contribute to the world someday?
[7:01] What's going to be the significance of my life and the impact of my life? And even when we hit midlife, often we talk about these midlife crises, right?

Where maybe what we thought we were going to be when we grew up, we didn't actually become. And we get to the middle of our lives and we're a bit disappointed. Or there was somebody that shared in the morning service that gave their testimony and said, actually, they got to the best point in their life where it seemed like everything was going really well and they were achieving everything they ever wanted to achieve, and yet they realized that life still felt hollow.
So even when they achieved it, they were still asking themselves, what is the purpose of all this? And then when you grow even older and you're near the end of life and you retire and your great life's work is done, you can still be asking yourself that question, what is life about now?
See, no matter what stage of life you're at, Jesus wants you to know what the great purpose of your life is. And what is it according to Jesus? It's to make disciples.
I think I would put it this way. According to Jesus, making disciples means teaching people how to live under the good and gracious and great authority of Jesus.
[8:18] Teaching people how to live under the good and great and gracious authority of Jesus. Do you know where this word disciple actually comes from? It comes from the world of teachers and students, kind of schools.

I don't know how many of you students get to choose your teachers. When you're in elementary school and high school, you normally don't get to choose your teachers. You just kind of get stuck with them, you know? No offense, Daryl.
I know you're a teacher. I'm sure you're a great teacher. But in the ancient world, students would go try to find their teachers. So when people became a certain age, they would go around listening to different teachers.

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They would listen to their teaching. And then they would watch how they lived their life and see if they lived their life in such a way that matched their teaching. And they would go to a teacher that they really wanted to become like.
Somebody they wanted to learn from and become like. And they would go to that teacher and say, would you take me on as your student? And if that teacher said, yes, I'll take you on as my student, then that person became a disciple of that particular teacher.
[9:22] And their life now changed. Everything for that person revolved around their teacher. Their job was to follow the teacher wherever the teacher went. Their job was to listen to the teaching and pay attention to what it meant, whatever the teacher said.

Their job was to see how the teacher interacted with people and navigated difficult and tricky circumstances. And to learn what they could learn about wisdom and how to navigate life.
In other words, to be a disciple of a teacher was not just to have a download of information. It was to have a life-on-life experience where you were seeking to become like the one you were following and learning from.
In other words, as one author put it, being a disciple of Jesus is becoming an apprentice of Jesus. And so when we are given this great commission to go make disciples of all nations, it is a great commission to help other people become apprentices of Jesus.
To help other people become lifelong learners of Jesus. To help other people learn how to live under his great and good and gracious authority. And the question is, how does this happen?
[10:36] Like, there's lots of ways this happens, but according to Jesus here, how does this happen? And he gives us two things. He says, really key is baptism. Probably didn't see that coming.

Okay, really key is baptism. And then really key is ongoing teaching and learning. So baptism. That's the first thing.
That's where discipleship begins is in baptism. Look at verse 20 with me. Jesus says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
We had nine baptisms this morning at the 10 a.m. service. It was marvelous. I think we were representing three to four continents of the world, which was amazing.
And the youngest person was two years old and the oldest person was 82 years old. And everything in the middle. Like Jacob and I were middlings. It was amazing to see.
[11:42] Because it made us realize that no matter where you come from in the world and no matter what age you are, discipleship all starts at the same place. Jesus calling you to repent and believe and be baptized in his name.

And when you are baptized according to Jesus here, it's not just that you enter into the life of the church and you gain a whole new family and life. Although that's really true. That's a great gift.
It's that you enter into the life of the Holy Trinity. Did you notice how it says, baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit? And so what is happening as baptism is that God is laying a hold of our lives.
He's drawing us into his life. He's saying, you are now my children and you belong to me. You're going to bear my name. You're going to enjoy my fellowship. You're going to experience my grace. And you're going to learn to trust my love and my faithfulness. You are being brought in. And that's what baptism does. It brings us into the church and it brings us into the life of God.
[12:42] And that's where discipleship begins. But discipleship is never just a beginning. Discipleship is an ongoing reality. And so we see God face to face one day. And so the second thing that Jesus says is disciple making progresses by ongoing teaching.

Look at verse 20. Go therefore make disciples of all nations, teaching them, verse 20, to observe or to keep or to obey. All that I have commanded you.
In other words, we have to show people how to live in alignment with Jesus Christ. And this is absolutely key to becoming like Jesus and living under his authority.
We have to know something about what he teaches. And we need others to help us understand what it means to live in line with what he teaches. And this is one of the things that I love about the Gospel of Matthew.
Matthew is just so practical. You could think of his Gospel as like a discipleship manual. He clustered together Jesus' teachings into five major blocks.

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[13:45] So that when you read his Gospel, you can understand what it means to observe his teachings. You can be like, okay, these are the things Jesus teaches on and this is what he cares about. For example, in chapters 5 to 7, the Sermon on the Mount.

Any of you heard of that? Chapters 5 to 7, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus teaches on discipleship. How do I become like Jesus in my life? Three chapters. In chapter 10, Jesus teaches on mission.
How do I serve Jesus in my life? That's chapter 10. In chapter 13, Jesus teaches on the kingdom of God. He says, how is Jesus at work in the world? And how do we discern what God's doing in the world?
That's chapter 13. In chapter 18, Jesus teaches on the church. He's like, how do I relate to other disciples of Jesus when they're sometimes not that fun to relate to? That's chapter 18.
It's really practical. And then in chapters 24 to 25, Jesus teaches about the last judgment. How will Jesus judge the world and set the world right again? So you have discipleship, mission, kingdom, church, last judgment, Jesus.
[14:48] Matthew is clustering Jesus' teaching together. So that we can know what it means to follow him. Isn't that a lovely thing? I'd really encourage you, if you have time this week. Take one of those blocks each day of the week.

Imagine Monday through Friday. You just read one of those blocks of Jesus this week. And to see what he did in your life through that. So first, Jesus makes a great claim. All authority has been given to me.
Second, Jesus gives us a great commission. Go make disciples, teach people how to live under my authority. And third, Jesus provides a great comfort.
And we really need this. Because the reality is, is that the world doesn't tend to mention Jesus on their top 10 most powerful people list. So in Forbes magazine.
Do you guys know Forbes magazine? You heard of that? It's kind of like a big business magazine. Does it still exist? Okay, thank you. Callan's telling me yes, and I trust Callan on business matters.
[15:48] Forbes, well, really on most matters. Forbes magazine in 2009 to 2018 would post an annual most powerful people in the world list.

And there would be about 70 to 75 people on that list. And it's really fascinating. If you read 2018 compared to 2009, there's only two people that are the same in 2018 that were on 2009 in the top 10 of the most powerful people list.
And so one of the things that showed me is that, oh, power in the world is a very unstable thing. It comes and it goes. And the other thing that's really interesting about the list is that Jesus never shows up on it.
It's as if the world doesn't know who is really in charge of the world. And so we can assume that if we are going to the world, and we really believe Jesus' claim, all power and authority has been given to me.
And our job is to go make disciples and say, look, the meaning and purpose of your life is to come under the authority of this Jesus. You can assume the world isn't always going to be keen on it, right?
[17:01] There are going to be times when it's not going to be easy for us, and it's going to be a struggle, and we're going to suffer, and we're going to be tempted to be ashamed of Jesus' great claim.

And of the great commission he's given us. And we'll realize probably pretty quickly that we do not have the power or the cleverness or the wisdom or the energy in ourselves to pull off what Jesus has called us to do.
Jesus has to give us something. And so we need Jesus to give us himself, his very great presence, so that in those moments when it's difficult, he can be the one who's there to help us and sustain us and encourage us and fortify us and strengthen us.
Every day of every week and every hour of every day. Isn't it marvelous that at the very beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, the first name that we hear is given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means God with us.
And then at the very last words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew are Jesus saying, I'm going to be true to my name. I will be with you always to the ends of the earth.

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[18:15] I love how one author put it. The discipleship, Jesus says, is not going to be a lonely road. Sometimes it feels that way. But Jesus is saying, in reality, I will always be there.

So let's wrap this up. Jesus makes a great claim, which leads to a great commission, which is sustained and strengthened by a great comfort. These are our marching orders as the church, the mission that the Lord Jesus gives us.
And so, my dear brothers and sisters, when you go out in this week and you read the news headlines, you read Twitter, and you find yourself deeply discouraged by what's happening in the world, remember Jesus' great claim.
He says, All authority has been given to me. Don't forget that. And when you board the bus, and you enter the office, and you knock on your neighbor's door, and you change your child's diaper, and you take your parent to the doctor, and you deal with that HR claim on your desk, remember Jesus' great commission.
He has called you to be his ambassador, to make disciples of all peoples. And when you feel alone, or you feel pressure to conform, or you want to give in, or you don't see a way out of the difficulty, or you wonder if, is this pressure ever going to ease up and get better, remember what Jesus promised.
[19:37] The great comfort. I will always be with you. I will always be with you. Brothers and sisters, this is the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what he wants to encourage us with today. And I want to end with this prayer, which is a prayer that we would remember God's presence with us this week.
O Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, we humbly pray that you would so guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life, we may never forget you, but remember that we are ever walking in your sight.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen.

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