

06/04/2023 Matt 28:16-20 "The Great Commission to Us."

ENTRANCE

I like Tom Cruise's movie "Mission Impossible." Of course, I watched most of its series. But I more like the expression, "Mission completed," especially when that mission seemed hard to accomplish.

Similarly, what the Lord Jesus said before He passed away on the cross impresses me always, "It is finished" In heaven, the Son was given a mission from the Father and came to earth. "He was deeply distressed and asked, 'Father, save Me from this hour' Yet, this is the very reason I came!" (John 12:26). Then, He accomplished the mission, and He could say, "It is finished" No one among us would have hoped for eternity IF Jesus didn't complete His given mission.

I would probably live longer than many of you, but I hope people may tell about me at my funeral, "*B. Sung has finished his mission. He has fought the good fight, has finished the race, and has remained faithful.*" I hope that all of us may hear the same thing. And then, standing before our heavenly Father, hear His words, "*Well done, My good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things (I gave you to do. So now) enter into the joy of your Lord. (Master's happiness. I'm so pleased with you.*"

TEXT

Today's text is a well-known passage called "The Great Commission:" "Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations." Together with the Great Commandments: Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, the Great Commission, the Two Cs, sum up our call as followers of Jesus. This is the central mission of the people of God, the GREAT COMMISSION of GREAT JESUS of our LORD, with His GREAT PROMISE! The primary purpose of the Church.

It is the last words of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew knew the principle that "last words are lasting words, under the Spirit's direction. It is the conclusion of the resurrection narrative and Matthew's entire contents. So, if a Christian understands all the rest of the Gospel of Matthew but fails to understand this closing passage, it is missing the point of the entire book, in fact, the whole Bible of the OT and the NT.

This is the reason the Church exists. Since Abraham, all the people of God have been commissioned to complete this GREAT COMMISSION. Apparently, all the blessings of the people of God are for that purpose, as God said in Genesis 12:2-3, "I will bless you... and you will be a blessing ... (for what?) all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." It doesn't mean the earthly blessings, but "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ..." (Eph 1:3) "the hope God has given, His rich and glorious inheritance ..." (v18)

That blessing in today's text means to be a disciple of Jesus or to believe in Him. We are called to be a part of this blessing and a vessel for it. Today, with the given text, I want to share 1) To whom the Lord gives the Great Commandment. This command has been given to all believers, but there are some things that the Lord makes them ready. 2) What the mission is, and 3) How we can accomplish that mission.

1. To whom the Lord gives the Great Commandment

Let's see the first part. We go back to after the risen Lord met His disciples in the Upper Room. **V16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.** This was according to the command of the Lord, and the eleven disciples, because Judas Iscariot had left the Lord.

Why did He tell them to go to Galilee and the mountain and meet you there? They had been in Jerusalem, and Jesus probably instructed them to return to Jerusalem after this meeting. What is the meaning of this place?

Jerusalem is the place where they were full of human expectations that the Lord would finally rise as the political Messiah, restore the glory of David, and assume He would distribute them to high positions under His power. Thus, they all betrayed their Lord when their expectations were unmet.

On the other hand, Galilee is where the Lord first called the disciples, and they began to follow the Lord. Galilee was the headquarter of the Lord's ministry. It was a place where he performed many miracles and taught. Still, in the latter part of His ministry, He traveled alone with his disciples to solitary places, focusing on them intensively and training them.

Mark records that there are two reasons why the Lord appointed the Twelve. "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that He might send them out to preach." (Mark 3:14).

In Matthew, a mountain is a place of revelation where the will of heaven is given. Jesus preached on a mountain, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-2), and was transfigured there. (17:1-9), and now He meets His disciples on the mountain. He calls them back right there.

To whom does the Lord give a mission? First, to those who love Him, who have recovered intimacy with the Lord. Before the events of the text, the Lord's resurrection was evident. However, the disciples lingered to follow Him because they felt sorry for the Lord - especially Peter, who had denied Him three times. So, they went out to sea again to catch fish. The Lord reappeared to them in the morning at the seashore and restored their relationship.

Jesus, the Creator, prepared breakfast for them with His own hands and fed them. Then, He recovered Peter by asking three times, "Do you love Me?" With that question, the Lord forgave and

restored Peter's three times of failures as a betrayer.

Second, they are available when Jesus calls them. The eleven were where Jesus wanted them to be. They were not the most humanly capable, intelligent, powerful, or influential people in the world. Still, they were where the Lord wanted them to be and were ready to be used in His service. It is about availability.

When the Lord calls us, it is not because we are qualified or capable enough but because He purchases our availability and usefulness to Him as an instrument of His will and power. They not only call Jesus only when they need Him, but they are available when Jesus calls them. Consequently, they received His Great Commission and His Great Promise.

Third, they regard Jesus Christ as God and treat Him as an object of their worship. They are worshipers of Jesus. **V17 When they saw Him, they worshiped him;** Their response to the Lord is to worship Him.

The Lord Jesus is not only the One who provides for our needs and eternal life, but the One we acknowledge as God, to whom we show our love, loyalty, and worship. Everyone has something to worship, whether it's God, money, or themselves. When God is not truly worshiped, He cannot be indeed served. But, if we value God, we can and will do what pleases Him. If you truly value Jesus and love Jesus, you will obey His Great Commission, whatever it takes.

So, the question is this "Can I say honestly that I love Jesus and treasure Him more than any other thing, even my life?" "Am I willing to be where Jesus wants me to be?" So, then, the Great Commission is not the mission impossible but a possible task. We are to do it willingly, and it will be completed.

However, it says, **but some doubted**. How could they doubt the Messiah? His resurrection was so apparent, His body transcending time and space was visible and touchable to them, and His explanation to the disciple on the road to Emmaus was so clear that He was the Messiah.

What's their problem?

The Greek verb "doubt" here implies hesitation or indecision rather than unbelief. The disciples were still struggling to comprehend what they were witnessing. The disciples are confused as they worship Jesus because of the sudden and extraordinary events that have occurred.

This is not because they don't believe in the resurrection, but because they don't have definitive answers about what recent events mean, how God's plan will relate to Christ's death and resurrection, what will happen in the future, what Jesus' mission and their mission is, what the promised kingdom of God looks like, how Jesus is currently saving his people, and so on. The faith must be fully digested within me, and the speed of my decision or commitment will vary accordingly.

Peter, who had just walked on the sea believing in the word of the Lord, immediately had doubts and fell into the water. Even one have strong faith can have doubts. "Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him and said, "You have so little faith. Why did you doubt Me?" (Matt 14:31). He was not without faith but with little faith; he believed in Jesus' power, but he also saw the wind, so he was hesitating, unable to decide between the threat of the wind and the power of Jesus.

Similarly, we have moments when we are sure we believe in the Lord, but we don't feel confident enough to decide what to do or how to act when we see things happening around us in our lives that we still don't understand.

How would Jesus feel when He sees them in that state? How would He react to them?

v18 Then Jesus came to them ... As He always does, the Lord's "coming to the disciples" was not to rebuke their betrayal and suspicion, saying, "*Do you still doubt? You have no answer, you pathetic things!*" but to reestablish an intimate relationship with Himself.

2. What is the mission & how to accomplish it

Then the Lord gives them a mission: what they do and live for. Some call it a sandwich mission with three layers: the bread on the top and bottom and the filling in the middle. You will know what it means to. The Lord says first. **V18 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

Authority refers to the right and power to speak and act as one pleases. It reminded me of Psalm 115:3 I meditated on last week, "Our God is in heavens, and He does as He wishes."

Jesus, our Lord, makes sure to let the eleven know what AUTHORITY HE has before He commands all believers. Otherwise, the command would have been impossible for the disciples to fulfill, and they might have ignored it.

The scope and the magnitude of the Authority of Jesus are absolute and infinite. Heaven is the realm that confirms the universal authority of Jesus. The divine power of the Lord is given from the heavenly throne. It extends to the whole universe to rule and judge angelic beings, even Satan, the highest-ranked but rebelled against Him. (Therefore, Satan is not an enemy equal to the Lord but a creature of the Lord and under his authority.) Jesus has all authority on earth over all of nature, each individual's life, time, talents, abilities, home, roles as parents and husbands, church leaders, governments, etc.

Colossians 1:16-17 says about Jesus. v16 "for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through

him and for him." v17 " He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together." There is nothing in heaven or on earth, visible and invisible, over which Jesus does not have Authority:

What authority? Forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and judge

Then what kind of authority the Lord has received? In His prayer to His Father, He says, "For you have **given him authority over everyone**. He gives **eternal life** to each one you have given him." (John 17:2) Thus, He also has this authority. The Lord said to the teachers of the law, "I want you to know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." (Mark 2:10)

Therefore, we are forgiven and saved not because we are worth, nor because of our good deeds or any contribution we made, even because we believed in Him as our merit, but because of the Authority Jesus has.

The Lord also has authority; He says, "And God has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man." (John 5:27) 28 "Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead (without exception) in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son," 29 "and they will rise again. (and then will judge them to live and to be condemned) Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment." So, He says, "... there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)

The Old Testament prophet Daniel saw the exact scene of the sovereign Authority being given to Christ. Danial 7:13-14 13 "As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence." 14 "He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His Kingdom will never be destroyed."

Therefore, the Lord Jesus does have the right and the power to do as He pleases. I hope you will take this truth about the Lord and His authority to heart.

The Great Commandments

By saying that, the Lord gives them the Great Commission. **V19 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, V20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

"Therefore" is the transitional word, identifying all the Lord's authority in v18 as the reason the disciples must carry out His orders. It means the Lord extends His authority to His disciples to

continue the work of the Kingdom of Heaven. V18 is the foundation for the success of their future ministry.

Just as the Father, by giving all His authority to His Son and sending Him to this earth, fulfilled His will through Him, the Lord also sends His disciples to continue the mission He left behind with all His authority.

There are four commands in His Great Commission: Go, Make disciples, baptize, and teach. Among them, one is the main verb, central command, and the other three are subordinates. Would you guess what the main verb is? It is "Making disciples." So we see *oo* make disciples is at the heart of the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus. In other words, it brings unbelievers to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Of course, it means believing in Jesus. Therefore, for making disciples, the Lord commands: Go to all nations, Baptize them, and teach them to obey.

Now let's think about each of them.

GO

Go is a contextual command. That is "Go to make disciples." "Go" in Greek is best translated as "having gone," suggesting that this requirement is not so much a command as an assumption. Anyway, it makes clear that the Church is not to wait for the world to come to its doors but that it is to go to the world.

Then, to whom? "of all nations." "All nations," in Greek, "ethnos," means "ethnic groups." These peoples' groups are consistent with the blessings God promised through Abraham. So again, Genesis 12:2, 3 "I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. All the families (peoples) on earth will be blessed through you." As I shared last week, it will be all those people described, "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

How can one be a disciple and what do they do?

So, "Go to make disciples of Me" is the Great Commission. Then, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? Who are they? What do they do? We see that through two other commands: Baptizing and teaching them to obey, which are instrumental. To be a disciple is, after all, to be baptized and, second, to obey all the teachings of the Lord.

Baptize them

What does it mean to be baptized? To baptize means to immerse in water. It means, in a word, a new identity and union with the Triune God. Romans 6:3 shows us the precise meaning of being baptized. "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" In other words, my old self, sin, greed, selfishness, and my nature to live according to my will died with the Lord.

v4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Now, with Christ living in me, I am born as a new me, who fulfills God's will, and I live each day with the power of the resurrection - the life and power of God poured into me. So, water immersion symbolizes our burial and resurrection with Christ. Then, in v5, Paul says what it means "For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like this."

Then, why baptize in the NAME of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? It is not a sacramental formula but believers' union with the whole Trinity. The phrase THE NAME here represents a person's fullness, including all that the person is, has, and represents. And the word "NAME" is singular, which emphasizes the unity of the Trinity by declaring that baptism should be done in their ONE NAME. Therefore, when the believer is baptized, he is identified with everything God is, has, and represents.

Just as we have become "the dwelling place, home of God the Father and the Son, and the temple of the Holy Spirit," it signifies entering into a new and loving relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, thus, having a new identity, and the relationship of allegiance with the Trinity, being ruled by them. This is the first part of being a discipleship of Jesus.

Teach them to obey

However, this must lead to and connect to the second element of discipleship. That is **v20 "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."** Making disciples is described as a command to teach for obedience.

The mission the Lord gives us is not simply to preach the Gospel and let them believe in Jesus but to teach them so to be knowledgeable? No, to obey. To obey what? Not just what I like and find acceptable but everything the Lord has commanded.

While being baptized means getting a new identity and being united with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, obedience to the Lord's commands is a way of life for what a Christian does and how a Christian lives on this earth. Those who believe in the Lord have been buried with Christ and raised with Him and live in obedience to His will. Thus, to believe in Jesus means to be a disciple of Him, and to be a disciple is a calling to a life of obedience to the LORD and all His teachings.

About obedience

Not all who claim they believe in Jesus are true disciples. As I mentioned last week, He says, "not everyone who calls Him, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only who does the will of His Father will enter." (Matt 7:21), which is the conclusion of the entire Sermon on the Mount. Why, even though they believe they don't enter heaven? He says, "I never knew you." (v22), "I

never knew in intimate relationships."

In other words, they didn't have a loving relationship with Jesus, as He also said, "Anyone who loves me, will obey My teaching. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching." (John 14:23,24).

Some "*believers of Jesus*" think of Jesus as their Savior but not as their Lord, the Owner and Master of their life and existence. They may need, want, and like Jesus, but not always, not in every aspect of their lives. They can get along with Jesus well as long as He respects their privacy, keeps their proper space and boundaries, does not interfere too much or demand when or where they do not want Him to be, etc.

I think many people live in the Christianity that Jesus has never taught nor could accept. Such forms of EASY BELIEVISM maintain that the only requirement for salvation is to "accept Jesus as Savior," but not as "their Master" by "Taking up his cross daily and following Christ." (Matt. 10:38) They do not treat Jesus as an object of their respect and worship, obedience, loyalty, and love. Yet, the Lord says, "When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love." (John 15:10)

A disciple can make another disciple

What Tozer said is true, "Only a disciple can make a disciple." For those who believe in Jesus yet without loving Him and obedience to Him, the Great Commission would be almost mission-impossible, even if they want to do it and try to do it or feel it's needed.

However, for the true disciples, who are united with the Trinity, therefore, who can say, "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20), it may still be challenging and demanding and will be met with rejection, but they make disciples of Christ no matter what.

As the Lord commanded to His disciples, "Remain in Me, and I will remain in you," thus, they remain in a close relationship with the Lord. He says, "Remain in My love," thus, "They love too because He first loved them." Then, He says, "Remain in My words," as He also said, "If you hold My teaching, you are really My disciples" (John 8:31); they obey all His teachings and commands. Therefore, they are willing and able to make disciples as they are, teaching them everything the Lord has commanded.

Still not easy

However, we know it's not easy to be or live as a faithful disciple of Jesus, much less make disciples of all nations. How can I teach others when I do not know the Bible well and sometimes doubt it?

If it is difficult even for me to break my own stubbornness, to change my own attitude of mind and short temper, to teach my children to obey, how can I teach all nations to obey all the commands Jesus taught? Is it really possible to make disciples of others, of all nations? YES, you are! How?

Along with Jesus having all authority, the Lord ties in one more fact with His command that enables us to do. So, we see why it is called a Sandwich command. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

The phrase "Surely I Am" and "always" are expressions calling attention to something of special importance in an emphasized form. "All" is a keyword repeated in 28:18–20 "all authority," "all nations," "all the Lord's commands," and "all days," which emphasizes Jesus' divine identity, who is called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," (Isa 9:6), and the realm of His authority reaches.

For those who want to be a disciple of Him and to obey His Great Commission, Jesus promises the living presence of Himself of ALL AUTHORITY is always with them, without a break, without end to the duration in this world. As long as the world lasts, Jesus the Lord will be with us in this world.

Our Lord Jesus might be saying like, "Now, pay special attention to what I am about to say because it is the most important of all. I, Myself, your divine, resurrected, living, almighty, eternal Lord, am with you always until I return and judge the world and rule My kingdom."

"Do not try, even think that you can make disciples in your own strength, through your experience and effort. Do not worry whether you can do it or not, but with all My might, of My own resources, by My will, the Father's will and way, through My Holy Spirit, You will do it. So stick to Me, rely on Me, Remain in Me, and you will bear much fruit!"

The presence and authority of the Messiah will accompany us as we obey and carry out His disciple-making ministry.

CONCLUSION

Now, I want to conclude this time. We live in an age when many Christians think little about their mission in this world but only care about their own state of mind, personal needs, and life situation. They attend services and meetings when convenient, take what they feel like taking, and have little concern for anything else.

They are involved in the Church only to the extent that it serves their own desires, which escapes both their understanding and concern that the Lord has given His Church a supreme mission and calls every believer to be an instrument in fulfilling that mission.

We often hear that we don't have enough people to work for a church. It was the same with the time of Jesus. Through the three years of the very successful public ministry of Jesus, countless people met Him, healed, heard His message, witnessed miracles, and followed Him. Still, at His ascension, a maximum of 500 people were with Jesus. In the Upper Room, 120 left, and now He is talking to the eleven.

God's work is not determined by how much or how little people do. It is accomplished through true disciples of Jesus, who love Him and thus obey Him, as the Son loved and obeyed the Father's will, not by their own power, but by the Lord who has all authority, and with the Lord who is always with them.

Today, through His Word, our Lord has shown us who He is, who has authority over our existence, life, eternity, and all things in heaven and on earth. Because He loves the Father and us, He saves us through His life-giving and self-sacrificial obedience, giving us the promise of eternal hope and joy. He has shown us the Father's will to establish His Kingdom through us those united to His death and resurrection by being present with them to the very end of the age, those who are willing to obey the Great Commission of the Great God.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Then, are you His disciple?

Do you not love the Lord?

Do you not love the Lord??

Then, would you not strive to be a faithful disciple of the Lord by knowing Him more, seeking intimacy, and walking with Him instead of settling for a more comfortable and relaxed life?

Would you not joyfully obey whatever the Lord, through His Spirit, enlightens you to do through His Word? Would you not want to hear from God the Father in heaven, "Well done, My faithful servant, now, share your Master's joy"?

Let's remember the Lord's word, "He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching." (John 14:24) But, "If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and WE will come to him and make our home with him." (v23)