

Matt. 28:16-20 Go and Make Disciples (A Reminder of Our Mission)

Through the years, I often repeat these words: “*We want to create an environment where making disciples is normal.*” The reason we desire such an environment is because of Jesus’ command to us here in Matt. 28. Here we find our practical mission on this earth: “***Go therefore and make disciples . . .***” Brothers and sisters, this is OUR mission! And we need this passage. After sometime in the OT with Zechariah, we need to be reminded again of our mission! With this in mind, I want to break down vv. 18-20 down into 4 parts as each are vital to understanding our mission. (Authority, Scope, Command, Presence. And I will apply these truths to us throughout.)

1. Authority. Our marching orders come with authority! We see this first in v. 17 as the Apostles worshipped Jesus. These men were good Jews. They knew that to worship a mere man would be blasphemy and idolatry at its height. They knew better than to worship a mere creature. Look also at v. 18. Jesus said to them, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**” Therefore, “*go and make disciples.*” It is of vital importance to us as we think about this command to know and understand the authority of the one who gives this command.

Kids, let’s say you are out in the yard playing with the other kids in your neighborhood. And as you are playing, one of them says to you, “*I think you should go home right now and clean your room.*” What would you do? You wouldn’t do it. You would tell them to be quiet and keep playing. Even as a child, my sister would sometimes try and tell me what to do. And I would say, “*You aren’t my mother or my daddy.*” But, what if your Father or Mother comes to you and says with all seriousness, “*Right now, go and clean your room?*” What will you do? You will go? Why? Because of his/her authority.

Today, there is NO ONE with greater authority than the Lord Jesus! In Col. 1:15-17 we read, “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**” And when we consider the incarnation of Christ, we know, the Son of God did not lay aside his deity. And the Apostle John says of Him, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth**” (John 1:14). Paul says to the Colossians: In him, “***All the fullness of God dwells . . .***” (Col. 1:19)

And the authority of Jesus is not merely found in words, but also in power. When he spoke, the demons shuddered, they obeyed in fear, being cast out with a word. Terrifying storms were calm at his word. Sickness and death itself was devoid of power as the Sovereign Lord healed the sick and raised Lazarus from the dead. And that’s not all. He laid down his life on a Roman cross as a sacrifice for sin. And he endured the wrath of God, and suffered in the place of sinners. At his death, defying all rules of nature, he cried out with a loud voice “**It is finished.**” And the centurion that stood by said, “**This is the Son of God**” (Mark 15:39). And then 3 days later, He rose from the dead. “**Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name**

that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). Today, this is the ONE we worship. And this is the ONE who give us our orders: Go and make disciples. Our immediate application is obedience. It is for every believer. It is for every church.

2. Scope. When I say “scope,” certain questions come to mind. How far do we go? Where do we stop? To whom and where are we sent to make disciples? Is it just here with our neighbors, is it merely with church members, or do we go further? The answer is clear. V. 19 says, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .”** In Acts 1 Luke tells us that before Jesus ascended back to the Father, he said to his disciples, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth . . .” (1:8).** Our command is to make disciples of the nations, the peoples of the entire earth. This is the scope of our mission.

This truth should be clear to us as we just finished Zechariah. Over and over we hear words like those found in 2:11: **“And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.”** Here in China Grove, we are the nations. The gospel came to many of our forefathers in Europe. And here we are today. In Matt. 24:12 Jesus says, **“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.”** Brothers and sisters, we are still here. This must mean there is great work to be done; particularly among the unreached peoples of this world. And though most of us will not be called overseas, as a church, if we are being obedient to Jesus’ command, some of us will go. Timothy’s calling was to STAY in Ephesus and be a pastor, and elder, as he worked in that local gathering of believers. Paul’s calling was to go where the gospel had not been proclaimed. In Rom. 15:20-21 he says, **“I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”** He is simply being obedient to the command of Christ to go to the nations.

This summer, many of us will be going to work with many folks who are making disciples in some very hard places. Next month, we will send Adam to go to a difficult place in India to help teach and disciple pastors. We must be about these things!

Application: The Gospel is for all nations. For every individual is a sinner and needs to hear that forgiveness of sins can be found in Christ. We must not stop until this mission is complete. God knows when this will be! And the reason the unreached (7,367 groups according to Joshua Project) are still unreached is because it is difficult. But, we must press on! Jesus Christ is worthy!

3. Command. The main emphasis of vv. 19-20 is to “make disciples.” This is a command! So, what does it mean to make a disciple? There is a lot we can say here, but I want to try and be as simple as possible. I think we can find the meaning from the text itself. Also found in this text are 3 more commands. They are: go, baptize, and teach. I want to talk briefly about each one of these to help us understand the command of Christ and our mission.

i. Go. We’ve already covered this in the “scope” of our mission. It is a given that we must go. This word is a progressive command. Some translate it “as you are going.” It is true that we are all “going” about in our neighborhoods and in the places God has put us. And, we must be about the task of making disciples as we go. But, this word is still a command. And it carries with it the force of a command as we **MUST** go. And we must go to all the peoples of this world. But, we don’t simply go. We tell! Acts 1:8: “***You will be my witnesses . . .***” You may have heard the saying, “*Share the gospel, and when necessary use words.*” This is ludicrous. “***For faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God***” (Rom. 10:17).

Paul understands this as he says in Rom. 10:13-15 (turn with me): “**For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**” **How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”** And the message is the good news. I am a Christian today because someone told me that “**God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son,**” and “**if I believe in him, I would not perish, but have everlasting life.**”

ii. Baptize. Baptism is the sign of the new covenant. Those who, in repentance, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are commanded to be baptized. In the OT, the people of Israel were circumcised as a sign that they were God’s people. In the NT, disciples are baptized. As my ring pictures that I am married, so my baptism pictures my union with Christ. And this we are commanded to do.

iii. Teach. The last command is to “teach.” Teach what? “All that I have commanded you” (v. 20). As we go out our doors and as we go to the ends of the earth, we make converts and we teach the commands of Christ, which are the commands of God. And these commands are found in the Word of God. Let me give some further applications.

Application: To make disciples is more than mere conversion. Jesus did not leave his disciples for three years. Much of what we’ve seen through the years in SB churches, I believe, is a reflection of our failure to emphasize “obedience to all the commands of Christ.” Walk an aisle. Raise your hand. Get baptized. Then go home and live as you want as we claim you in our numbers. Shame on us. We must be ready and willing to spend time with people!

Application: Making disciples is an ongoing messy process. Disciples are at different places in their sanctification. This is why Paul tells the older women in Tit. 2 to “**teach what is good, and**

so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled . . . (vv. 3-5). And, that the older men to “urge the younger men to be self-controlled,” and “to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech . . .” (vv. 6-8).

Application: From another perspective, our mission is to duplicate ourselves. Disciples make disciples . . . that make disciples . . . that make disciples . . . etc. In the context of elders (though the application and command is to ALL of us), Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:2: **“what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”** So I must ask, Who are you speaking to? Who are you meeting with? Who are you teaching to obey the commands of Christ? Are you multiplying yourself? We must do this individually. And, we must do this as a church.

Application: Disciples will be made by someone whether we do it or not. And if we cease to make disciples, we cease to fulfill our mission and in my opinion cease to be a church. I say this because Jesus says, **“I will build my church . . . and the gates of hell will not prevail”** (Matt. 16:18).

Application: The mission of the church is not merely to do good works. Our primary task is not to feed the hungry, or teach people to read, or build hospitals or schools, or improve human rights or change the government (though we do all these things). Our mission is to make disciples of Christ by teaching them to obey all the commands of Christ.

Application: I want to speak for a moment on the difference between evangelism and discipleship. We tend to separate these truths from one another. We say, *“Go and tell.”* This is evangelism. And this is certainly true. But, then, when someone believes the gospel, discipleship begins. Now, there is truth to this understanding. But, I think it fails to do justice to the biblical command of making disciples. Why? Because BOTH telling and teaching them to obey fall under the command to make disciples. You cannot have a disciple if there is no preaching of the gospel. And if we stop at evangelism, then we stop teaching these new converts to “obey” all the commands of Christ. So, we go and tell (outside these walls) and then, when they believe, we gather them into the church and then we continue teaching disciples to obey. This is what we do in the preaching of the Word, in the ways we sing, in the ways we pray, in the things we do in our home groups, etc. With this in mind, by way of application, I think we are “heavy” on the latter end. I think (I hope) we do a good job of teaching disciples to obey all the commands of Christ. BUT, if we do not go and tell, at some point, we will die as a church. Maybe, by his grace, God will continue to bring people to us to hear the Gospel and be “discipled.” But, at the same time, if we are not telling our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends, our acquaintances, those in our community, we are not a very healthy church. I think, over the years, we have gotten MUCH better at making disciples of one another, the “inward” part of making disciples. But, when I look at myself and I take a look around, I am not satisfied with our efforts in this area. I know this is a

bold statement! And I know this kind of culture in a church does not change overnight. But, by God's grace, I hope to see this change in the coming days. So, how? First, pray! Pray that Christ would be big and beautiful in your hearts and minds. This is first and foremost. Second, pray for God to give you boldness. Third, pray for God to give you someone to speak with on a regular basis. Fourth, pray for your hg leaders, pray for your elders, that we will lead the way in this regard. Fifth, pray in hg for opportunities and then share with your group. (This is a start.) Let's move on to finish this morning.

4. Presence. Very briefly, look at the last part of v. 20. **“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** What was lost in the fall of man, we have now gained in Christ. What a fitting way to end this passage with our mission before us! What a fitting way to end the Book of Matthew! Any time we see the word “Behold” we must know what follows is something worth beholding, something great or unusual. This is what Paul calls, **“Christ in you, the hope of glory . . .”** (Col. 1:27). I would argue, from one perspective, that it is this truth that compels us to do the difficult work of making disciples in this world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, we press on! It is the presence of God, without which, we would fall by the wayside. This is why we go! This is why we walk next door, this is why we take our families to the ends of the earth. And I would argue, this is why we press on in this difficult world of sin. This is why we say with Martin Luther: *“Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also. The body they may kill. God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever.”* God is with us!

This is our mission: Go and Make Disciples. The Lord of the universe has given this command. And, this command comes with authority. The scope of our mission is the world. Our practical command is to make disciples. We go, we baptize and we teach; we teach them to obey all the commands of Christ. And, in this difficult world God is with us! He is with us in the Son, as He give us the Holy Spirit as we go.

To God be the glory! May this serve as a good reminder for us this morning!