

Orenco Church
Wednesday Night Study
September, 2025

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Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV)

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¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Matthew 28:16-20 (New King James)

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:16-20 (ESV)

A Word-Study on Matthew 28:16-20

A word study of Matthew 28:16-20, known as the <u>Great Commission</u>, reveals key themes of authority, discipleship, and promise. Jesus, having received all authority (πάσα ἐξουσία - pasa exousia) in heaven and on earth, commissions his followers to

"go" (πορεύεσθε - poreuethé) and "make disciples" (μαθητεύσατε - mathēteusate) of all nations. This involves the actions of "baptizing" (βαπτίζοντες - baptizontes) and "teaching" (διδάσκοντες - didaskontes) them to obey Christ's commands, all while being assured of His constant presence ("I am with you always") until the end of the age.

Authority (v. 18):

_πάσα ἔξουσία (pasa exousia) - "All authority" or "all power". This phrase underscores the cosmic scope of Jesus' power, which forms the basis for His commission to His disciples.

Go (v. 19):

_πορεύεσθε (poreuethé) - The present active imperative "Go," "Go therefore" or "Go forth". It is not an optional suggestion but an imperative, a command to move out into the world.

Make Disciples (v. 19):

μαθητεύσατε (mathēteusate) - The aorist active imperative, which translates to "make disciples" or "disciple them". This is the central command of the passage, and the actions of baptizing and teaching are the means by which disciples are made.

Baptizing (v. 19):

βαπτίζοντες (baptizontes) - A present active participle, indicating "baptizing" as a continuous action that happens while making disciples.

Teaching (v. 20):

διδάσκοντες (didaskontes) - Another present active participle, signifying the action of "teaching" and instructing disciples. The disciples are to be taught to obey all that Jesus commanded.

I am with you always (v. 20):

ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἔως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος (egō meth' hymōn eimi pasas tas hēmeras heōs tēs synteleias tou aiōnos). This promise of Christ's perpetual presence is crucial, as it provides the power

and assurance necessary for the disciples to fulfill the daunting task of the Great Commission.

Significance of this Passage

A Universal Mission:

Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations" (v. 19) indicates that the Christian mission is for everyone, not just one group of people.

A Response to Christ's Authority:

The passage highlights that believers are compelled to go and make disciples because of Christ's ultimate authority, not their own abilities.

A Life of Discipleship:

The call is not merely to convert but to make "disciples" (μαθητεύσατε - mathēteusate), individuals who are committed to following and obeying Jesus in every aspect of their lives.

A Promise of Presence:

The promise of Christ's presence is a reminder that the followers are not sent alone but with the assurance that Christ is with them, enabling them to fulfill the commission.

Matthew 28:16-20 is significant as the biblical Great Commission, where the resurrected Jesus commissions his disciples to make disciples of all nations, instructing them to baptize and teach them His commands. This passage establishes the universal scope of the Christian mission, grounded in Jesus' ultimate authority over heaven and earth, and offers the promise of His perpetual presence and power to those who obey.

The Command: Making Disciples

Universal Scope:

Unlike Jesus' earthly ministry, which focused on the Jewish people, this commission explicitly broadens the mission to "all nations," encompassing every people and race.

The Task:

The disciples' main task is to "make disciples," meaning to create devoted followers who are learners and imitators of Jesus' teachings.

Methods:

To achieve this, they are to baptize new believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

The Authority: Jesus' Divine Power

Source of Authority:

Before issuing the command, Jesus declares that "All authority... in heaven and on earth has been given to me". This divine authority is the basis for the commission.

Lordship over Creation:

This declaration reveals Jesus as the sovereign Lord of all, not just during His ministry but as the resurrected Son of God, giving weight to His command.

The Promise: Jesus' Everlasting Presence

• Perpetual Presence:

At the end of the passage, Jesus gives a crucial promise: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age".

Empowerment for the Mission:

This promise assures the disciples that they are not alone in this enormous task; Jesus will be with them in spirit, providing His power and presence to enable them to fulfill the commission.

In Summary

Matthew 28:16-20 is a foundational text for Christian mission. It calls believers to a universal, ongoing task of making disciples through baptism and teaching, empowered by Jesus' all-encompassing authority and sustained by His constant, spiritual presence.

Go and Make Disciples . . .

Over the past weeks, we have been exploring the biblical truth that *every* Christian is a "full-time missionary" and unpacking what I'm calling the Three Myths of Missions which block us from really embracing our roles as disciple-makers. The third and final myth of missions that we will unpack this week is that in order to fulfill the Great Commission, you must "go" away from your current vocation and location.

A few years ago, I heard one of the most life-changing sermons preached on the Great Commission by Dr. Kennon Vaughan. Focusing on the word "Go" in Jesus's command in Matthew 28:19, Dr. Vaughan said, "The word 'go' will "unlock the meaning for us as to when we are to carry out the Great Commission. The word 'Go' literally means 'having gone.' 'Go' is not a command, [Jesus] is not commanding them to go, as much as He's saying, 'Having gone...turn men into disciples!' The going is assumed. In other words, Jesus is saying, 'Having gone from here, as we go, as you go, turn men into disciples.' Jesus didn't go more than 200 miles away from His own hometown, and yet He is saying go make disciples of all nations, and I would venture to say Jesus is the greatest disciple maker in the history of the world. It wasn't about how far He went. It was about what He did while He was going. The same is true for you and me."

It may be rare that we hear about the Great Commission. Yet, we read: "As you are going...make disciples." That changes everything.

While God may indeed be calling you to change your vocation or your location, that is certainly not a requirement for fulfilling the Great Commission. The truth is that Jesus has called each and every one of us to be a full-time missionary, making disciples as we go throughout our work and our lives.

When we understand that work is inherently good and meaningful, that the calling of a pastor is no higher than the calling of the congregation, and that Jesus has

commanded us to make disciples as we are going throughout life...that changes everything.

Now it doesn't matter what your job title is—you are commanded to make disciples.

It doesn't matter if we live in Hillsboro, Oregon or Hillsborough, California, or any other Hillsboro in the USA or in the world—we are commanded to make disciples.

It doesn't matter if you are an entrepreneur, an artist, pastor, a student, a stay-at-home-mom, an accountant, or a barista—you are commanded to make disciples.

Not at some point in the distant future. Not when you retire from your current vocation. Not just on the next short-term missions trip. *Today*. You are a full-time missionary. What an awesome privilege. What an incredible responsibility.

Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit . . .

In Matthew's story of Jesus, these are His parting words to His eleven remaining disciples. Verses 18–20 are often called the "Great Commission" because Jesus is sending His hand-chosen disciples out into the world to accomplish a specific mission: Make more disciples. This comes with some noteworthy inclusions, but what is also crucial are things which Jesus does *not* say.

Specifically, the disciples are to make more disciples of *all* nations. This means people from every people group and ethnicity on earth. Through Jesus, God's relationship with humanity has moved beyond Israel to include people from every corner of the world who come to the Father through the Son.

Jesus' command is to make "disciples." A disciple is someone who becomes like his or her master by living in a servant relationship to him. They learn from and submit to that person's example. That's what each of the eleven disciples hearing this for the first time had done in answer to Jesus' call. It is now what they will invite others

to participate in from around the world.

Discipleship to Jesus involves at least the two things Jesus mentions in this command: baptism and obedience. The disciples are commanded to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The choice to be publicly baptized is evidence that someone has believed in Jesus and made the commitment to follow Him. The disciples were given the authority to baptize that person in the name of God, declaring that person's position in the eternal family of God.

Notable is that Jesus does not command His disciples to "print Bibles," or anything similar. The written Word of God is our ultimate reference for matters of faith (1 Corinthians 4:6; Acts 17:11). It was intended for that purpose by God (2 Timothy 3:16–17). It is not meant to be the *only means*, or even the *primary means*, by which new Christians learn about faith (Acts 8:30–31). The primary work of the Great Commission is to "make disciples," which means the cooperative, mentoring process we now refer to as "discipleship" (Acts 18:24–28; Hebrews 10:25; 13:7).

Scriptures referenced above:

Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

1 Corinthians 4:6

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Acts 17:11

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless

someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:30-31

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Acts 18:24-28

. . . not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:25

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:7

Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you . . .

In <u>Matthew 28:19–20</u>, Jesus bestows excellent honor upon His disciples, commanding them, "Go therefore and 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 observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (NKJV). This passage is commonly known as the <u>Great Commission</u>. The specific call to "teach them to observe all things" underscores

the importance of conveying knowledge and guiding new believers to trust and obey Christ.

The primary directive in the Great Commission is to make disciples. <u>Discipleship</u> is not merely about transferring information or doctrine; it is about shaping lives to reflect the character of Jesus. In <u>John 8:31–32</u>, Jesus says, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (ESV). True discipleship involves abiding in Jesus' word, which requires not only understanding but practicing His teachings. Therefore, when Jesus instructs His disciples to teach others to observe all things, He calls them to nurture a way of life that follows His instructions.

The "all things" that Jesus commands to be taught are the entirety of His doctrine. In teaching others to "observe all things," the disciples would relay the importance of following the rule of Christ. Jesus did not give His disciples a limited set of instructions but a complete way of life. "Godliness has value for all things" (1 Timothy 4:8). By instructing His disciples to teach others to observe all things, Jesus ensures that His disciples will live out the fullness of His teachings, embracing all aspects of the Christian life.

"Teaching" in the context of the Great Commission is not a one-time event but an ongoing relationship in which the teacher guides the learner in understanding and applying Jesus' commands. Paul's relationship with Timothy is a prime example of this kind of discipleship. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul writes, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (ESV). Paul's instruction to Timothy illustrates the importance of passing on teachings in a way that enables others to teach and live them out as well. "Teaching them to observe all things" involves a cycle of discipleship. Each generation of believers is to be equipped to live out and pass on the teachings of Christ. The result is a spiritual family that transcends time and space.

In <u>Ephesians 4:11–13</u>, Paul explains that Christ gave the church "apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure

of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (ESV). Again in this passage we see that teaching is essential for equipping believers to grow to maturity. "Teaching them to observe all things" ensures that believers are aware of Christ's teachings and grow in their ability to live them out.

Jesus' words in Matthew 28:20 conclude with a promise: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (ESV). Jesus guides and empowers us to teach others. Therefore, teaching is part of the larger mission of preparing believers for the return of Christ. In 1 John 2:28, John encourages believers, "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming" (ESV). Teaching others to observe all Jesus commanded is part of abiding in Him, ensuring believers are ready to meet Him when He returns.

And I am with you always – even to the end of the age.

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age" is the conclusion to the Great Commission, a quote from Jesus found in the Bible in Matthew 28:20. This promise assures followers of Christ's perpetual presence and divine support, even after his earthly ministry ended.

Context and Meaning

The Great Commission:

The phrase comes at the end of Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus commissions his disciples to make disciples of all nations, teach them His commandments, and promises them his constant presence.

• Perpetual Presence:

Jesus' assurance is meant to bring a sense of security and hope to believers, promising his abiding presence with them throughout their lives and through every challenging situation.

End of the Age:

The phrase "end of the age" refers to the conclusion of the present era, which some interpret as the end of Jesus' own generation or the final completion of the world.

Why It Matters to Christians

• Divine Support:

For Christians, this verse is a reminder that Jesus does not leave them alone but offers continuous support in their mission and everyday lives.

• Reassurance in Times of Hardship:

The promise offers reassurance during times of difficulty, sorrow, or uncertainty.

• Eternal Promise:

It serves as an eternal promise from the Savior, ensuring continued reliance on His strength and presence until the very end of time.

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave His charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20 (the Message)

In Conclusion:

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus gives his disciples the "Great Commission," a final directive to make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Trinity, and teach them to obey Jesus' commands, all while assuring them of his constant presence until the end of the age. This command serves as the climax and conclusion of the Gospel, emphasizing Jesus' ultimate authority and the universal scope of his mission for his followers.

The Scene

Meeting on a mountain:

The eleven disciples go to a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had instructed them to meet.

Worship and doubt:

When the disciples see Jesus, they worship him, but some still have doubts, which is seen as a normal part of the faith journey.

Jesus' Authority and Command

• Universal authority:

Jesus states that "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth".

• The Great Commission:

Because of this authority, he commands his followers to go and make disciples of all nations.

Instructions for Discipleship

• Baptism:

Disciples are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

• Teaching obedience:

They must teach these new disciples to obey everything Jesus has commanded.

The Promise of Presence

• **Always with them:** Jesus concludes his final words by promising to be with his disciples always, even to the end of the age.

Significance

- Climax of the Gospel: This passage provides the ultimate purpose for the Gospel of Matthew.
- **Global mission:** The command to make disciples of all nations highlights a mission that extends beyond a single people or place.
- **Presence and power:** It assures believers that their mission is carried out with the empowering presence of Jesus himself.