



Temple Baptist Church
Wilmington, North Carolina
Dr. Mark E. Gaskins, *Senior Pastor*
The Lord's Day, April 23, 2017

www.templebaptist.us

© 2017

On Mission with the Risen Lord
Matthew 28:16-20¹

If you grew up in a Baptist church, probably the first Bible verse you ever memorized was John 3:16, most likely from the beloved King James Version translation of it:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

In all likelihood, you soon learned the King James rendering of Matthew 28:19-20—

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

For many generations, these verses have been part of the Baptist DNA. We call it “The Great Commission,” and rightly so. It’s the commission that Jesus gave His disciples after His crucifixion and resurrection and before His ascension into heaven to sit at the Father’s right hand. It’s His instructions to His church to carry on His mission in the world—to be *on mission* with Him in the world.

The commission

When we read Matthew’s account of the Gospel closely, we see that many significant events in Jesus’ ministry took place on a mountain—the Sermon on the Mount, His transfiguration, His teaching about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and His return in glory, His prayer and arrest in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. And here He gave His Great Commission to His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. I’d never thought about that until one of my seminary professors, Dr. Don Cook, pointed it out in a conversation one day.

Jesus had given directions to the eleven disciples to meet Him on a certain mountain in Galilee (remember Judas had betrayed Him, then committed suicide, so it was now the Eleven instead of the Twelve). Matthew doesn’t tell us exactly *when* this meeting took place, except that it was *after* Jesus’ resurrection. So the disciples went to Galilee to this mountain. They probably weren’t prepared for what was about to happen.

When they got there, Jesus, now the *risen Lord*, came to them. When they saw Him, they worshiped him, even as they struggled with doubts. Then Jesus spoke to them.

Unfortunately, in our activist mentality, we Baptists have often overlooked where the

commission actually starts. We go right to verse 19, “Go therefore . . .”

But Jesus *began* by saying in verse 18: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”²

Now that’s crucial! *In the context of worship*, Jesus declares that God the Father has given Him *all authority* in heaven and on earth—the whole universe, in the realm of eternity and in the realm of time and space!

Jesus was saying that Daniel 7:13-14 had been fulfilled in Him:

“I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
Then to Him was given dominion and glory
and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.”

So from the get-go, the focus is on Jesus and His authority, His Messianic mission to be *Lord* of all nations, for all nations to come under His discipline and rule.

In other words, the *basis* for Jesus’ commission to His disciples is *His lordship*!

That’s why the commission is for His disciples to “make disciples of all the nations” (28:19)! It’s only as the peoples of all the nations come under Christ’s reign, only as they are disciplined under His teaching and rule, that they can be truly right with God so that rather than spending eternity perishing in separation from Him in hell, they will forever enjoy His presence in heaven and in the new creation!

Now this disciplinemaking that Jesus commands here is not only telling the good news, the gospel of Jesus, so that people can come to know Him. It’s also *identifying them with Jesus through baptism* “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19) once they’ve put their faith in Him, placing *His mark* on them, so to speak, just as we have done with Nate earlier in our service this morning. You see, while baptism expresses a new believer’s faith in Christ, it’s something we submit to, not something we achieve. It’s something the church does to us, not something we do to ourselves. It pictures what God has done to and for us in Christ, not what we have done for ourselves.

But this disciplinemaking Jesus was commanding doesn’t stop there either—believers must be *taught the way of Jesus*, to obey all that He as Lord has commanded.

One day one of the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” Quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus told him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.” Then He quickly added, “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Leviticus 19:18). On these two commandments hang all the Law and the

Prophets.” In other words, all that He commands is summed up in these two commandments—do these, and we’re doing what He has commanded.

Now Jesus promises us as His disciples that as we go about making disciples, we won’t be alone, because *He is with us always*, “even to the end of the age.”

If we translated what Jesus says here very literally, we’d see that just as the one who has been given *all authority* commands us to make disciples of *all nations*, teaching them *all that He commanded*, He promises us that He is with us *all the days*, even to the end of the age!

So our commission as Jesus’ followers is framed by *His power* and *His presence*, by His authority and His activity through us as we extend and fulfill His continuing mission in the world. Or to put it another way, *the risen Lord Jesus commands us to be on mission with Him in the world*.

You see, Jesus’ Great Commission really is much more about *Him* and God’s great redemptive purpose in Him than it is about *us*. It’s about *the kingdom of God*! It’s about Christ and His rule, about how God is redeeming a people for Himself out of all the nations and is redeeming His creation as Paul talks about in Romans 8:18-25. It’s about how, as Paul put it in Ephesians 1:10, God is working “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (NIV, 1984 edition). It’s about how Jesus commissions us *to carry on His mission* in the world *with His authority*, embodying His presence through the Holy Spirit in us as His disciples and among us as His people. Since the risen Lord Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth as both the promised Messiah King of Israel and the Lord of the universe, then it is incumbent upon all nations to become His disciples! Not to become His disciples is to be in rebellion against the King!

When this reality takes hold of us, it transforms us so that we become *passionate* about Christ and His rule. When we become passionate about Christ and His rule, we become passionate about His Great Commission! And His Great Commission arises out of and includes His Great Commandments to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:34-40)—we make disciples because we love Him; we teach them to observe all things that He has commanded us because He told us to and because we love them (28:20)! As Steve Green sang it so well some years ago, “To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission”!³

Fulfilling His commission

So what does this look like for us as the Temple Baptist Church of Wilmington, North Carolina, nearly 2,000 years after Jesus first gave this commission? Just how are we to be *on mission with the risen Lord*?

Christ’s mission is grounded in and grows out of worship. It’s empowered by the risen Lord who is present with us all the days, even to the end of the age. And it encompasses *all* the nations—including our own!

And we really don’t have to go very far from our church’s doorstep to reach out to people of all nations anymore. The 2010 U.S. Census identified at least *six races or ethnicities* of people living inside the city limits of Wilmington!⁴ That year, according to the census, 6.3 percent of the people living in Wilmington were foreign born—*nearly 7,100 individuals*.⁵ Now, seven years later, there may well be even more. According to a 2015 demographic study provided to our church, *thirteen foreign languages* are spoken in the home within a one and a half mile radius of

this sanctuary!⁶

So being on mission with the risen Lord might mean becoming even more open to people who are different from us participating with us in our worship, so that our congregation on Sunday morning begins to look more and more like a rich, colorful tapestry.

It might look like investing more of ourselves and our funds in missions at home *and* around the world and less in ourselves and our own comforts.

It might look like a unique kind of after-school program or a children's music academy.

It might look like getting to know our unchurched neighbors by interacting with them in the community as well as hosting events here at our church facilities.

These kinds of ministries and activities help us to establish and nurture relationships with our surrounding neighbors that will build bridges into our surrounding communities and hopefully develop into opportunities to tell them about Jesus and to help them know Him too.

And as we reach out to people in Jesus' name and we witness to them the good news of the gospel through our works and our words and our way of life in our city, and they come to trust Him as their Lord and Savior, it might look like each of us investing ourselves personally in one or more of their lives to help them know how to observe the way of life that Jesus taught us and to encourage them in it, helping them to grow into mature *disciples* of Jesus.

Our risen Lord Jesus commands us to be on mission with Him in His world, making disciples of all the nations.

It's not His suggestion, or even His request.

It's His *command*, His *commission*.

He has the right to make it. He is the risen Lord. All authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth.

And that's how He's chosen to do it. All authority, all nations, all He commands us, all the days.

Amen.

†MEG

¹ These commentaries were helpful in my interpretation of this passage: Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," in *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992); David Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, n.d); and Frank Stagg, "Matthew," in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol.8 (Nashville: Broadman, 1969).

² Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture taken from The New King James Version.

³ John Mohr and Randall Dennis, "The Mission," © 1989 Feed and Seed Music/J.R. Dennis Music; <https://www.scribd.com/doc/160304911/Steve-Green-The-mission-songbook-pdf>; accessed 4/20/2017.

⁴ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>; accessed 4/20/2017.

⁵ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>; accessed 4/20/2017.

⁶ The FullInsite Report, p. 23.