

The Great Commission
Matthew 28:16-20

Circumstances of life have provided opportunities to deepen my thinking about death.

If I knew my time to go on to Heaven was near, what statement would I leave with those I loved most?
What challenge would assist them in seeing clearly the responsibility of life?
What encouragement would stimulate them to accept that challenge?

Jesus had such an opportunity to share with His loved ones.

He had sacrificially died and miraculously risen from the dead.

He knew what only God Almighty could know and related it as only He could.

God in human flesh sounded the clarion call that we who have been born again by His blood and Spirit should bring others into a redemptive Master-servant relationship with Him.

Have you taken to heart this last word and testament which Jesus left for us in Matthew?

Jesus had burst forth in new power from the grave and the now unsealed tomb and had revealed Himself to His disciples.

He had invited them to go to a place, a mountain in Galilee which was familiar to them.

This was probably the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus was transfigured (Mt. 17)

The disciples, especially Peter, James and John would never forget the event or the place.....

Now the Resurrected Jesus called them out from the threats and distractions of the great city of Jerusalem to the country side of Galilee away from the Lake of Galilee where the majority of Jesus' earthly ministry had occurred.

There Jesus would reveal Himself and His mission to His disciples and ask them to commit the rest of their life to its completion.

Verse 17 tells the disciples response to seeing Jesus. *And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.*

When they saw Jesus, they worshiped Him.

We too need to see, to get this vision of Jesus as the Risen Lord of Life.

He has conquered the humanly unconquerable foes of sin, the devil and the grave.

There in living proof He stood. The Sinless One whom sin, the grave and the Devil could not hold.

The One worthy of all glory and honor.

If our heart and mind will capture who Jesus Christ really is, it will evoke worship within us.

It speaks volumes to me to know that those men who knew Jesus best would worship Him.

Those who know me best are certainly in no danger of worshipping me.

These disciples spent day and night with Him for three years.

They had seen Him face tremendous challenges of opportunity and opposition.

They had seen Him when things were going well and when things were going poorly.

They had seen Him when circumstances and antagonist were closing in around Him.

They had seen Him when miracles were at His left and right hand and people wanted to make Him King.

These men, these Jewish men, for whom the First and Second Commandments forbid giving worship to any but the One True God, fell down and worshiped Jesus.

Worship is reserved for the Lord God alone.

If those who knew Jesus best would proclaim and worship Him as Lord and God then those of us who know Him by the spiritual eyes of faith must join them in worshipping Him as Lord and God.

Yes, those who know Jesus best worship Him most.

Notice that as they bowed in worship that some were doubtful.

Some would not believe unless they insert their hands within His spear pierced side and nail pierced hands.

They wanted additional proof as doubters always do.

Many will be doubtful in our day and age too.

We cannot expect all to see with the same clarity that Jesus is the Risen Lord of Life as others do, yet Jesus comes and ministers to all.

Verse 18 begins, And Jesus came up and spoke to them.

Notice that the doubts of the doubter could not keep Jesus away from those who worship Him.

We too need Jesus to come near and speak to us.

If we will but worship Him, Jesus will draw close and speak His words of life to us.

Many times we prohibit the presence and power of Jesus within a service or within our life because we refuse to join together in worship of Him.

We refuse to give Jesus the homage that is His due.

We refuse to recognize His worthiness within our own daily life, within our own daily routine and wonder why His Word doesn't speak to us.

Our life is not relaying a message to God that we adore You, love You, and want You to come near as Lord and speak to us.

We need to envision Christ for who He is.

We must worship Him in spirit and in truth that He might be given liberty to come and minister His Word among us.

Worship is recognizing that He is worthy and that we want Him to draw near and do His ministry, His Work.

We want His ministry within our personal life, within our family, within our Bible study class, within the church where Christ has us embodied.

God, we want You to draw near and speak to us.

Oh that we might lift Jesus up so that all might grasp a vision of Him and His glory and that He might come near and minister His life and Word to us!

Verse 18 continues, *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."*

Oh that Jesus would draw near and speak.

That He would draw near and touch and heal and give us the necessary unction that we need to complete the task that He has called us to.

Do hear the claim that Jesus makes which only God could make?

He says all authority has been given Him in Heaven and on earth.

We are a power-seeking people and yes God does give power but only after we have received authority.

Jesus does have all authority, not only in the heavens above but on the earth in which we live.

If we are going to receive legitimate authority, we must receive it from Him.

Let me help you distinguish between power and authority.

Many of you cross the street to get to your vehicle. Suppose that a large truck was coming and you decide to stop it. You place your hands against it, and you stop it right? Well, of course you don't. You cannot out power a truck on your best day.

But I have seen people step out in the middle of a busy street, hold up their arm and big powerful diesel trucks come to a stand still.

What's the difference?

The one has on a police officer's uniform. He has been invested with authority by the people to carry out His assigned task. The officer might not have more power than another man but He has been given more authority, so that he might preform the task that society designates for Him to accomplish.

The centurion with the dying servant knew what authority was all about. Luke 7:1-10.

He asked Jesus to only say the word and it will be done.

He was a man that had authority because he was under authority.

We too, if we will reside under the authority of Jesus, will have His authority to carry out the task He assigns us to do.

Many of us in our own daily routine have not the authority to carry out life as we should because we simply have not come under the authority of Jesus Christ.

We live within our own power and ability and thus only accomplish the temporary things that others are giving their time and energies to do.

There is no opportunity for authority and power that God alone can give unless we abide under His Lordship.

II. A Great Command; 19-20a. – Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit.

The first participle (in the Greek text) that carries the power of command is go.

We are not to wait for people to come to us, we are to go to them. (10 Young people are leaving.....)

Jesus would have His people on the offensive and not always on the defensive.

MOBILITY: KEY TO CONQUEST

In the 1930s, the French built the famed Maginot Line as a defense against German attack. This ultra-modern fortification of concrete barriers and hardened bunkers was considered to be impregnable. Its concrete was thicker and its guns heavier than any the world had ever seen. But the builders of the Maginot Line had not counted on the Nazi "blitzkrieg" (lightning war), a rapid plan of attack that emphasized speed and mobility. The fabled Maginot Line became a useless pile of concrete in the face of the superior mobility of the German armies.

What is true in warfare is no less true in Christian evangelism.

Jesus knew this. He carried his campaign for the hearts of men into the villages, the marketplaces and the open countryside.

In the Great Commission, He commanded His disciples to "Go!"

If we fortify ourselves within our church buildings, we will lose the battle for the souls of men.

Those who conquer never stand still.

We are commanded to go and make disciples. Make disciples is the key verb in the imperative commission.

What is a disciple?

Jesus defines who a disciple is in Luke 9:23-24. And He was saying to all, *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."*

The third element of Jesus command is baptize.

Baptize literally means to immerse.

It (1) represents cleansing-purification from sin and sin's power.

Baptism (2) symbolizes death and resurrection of both Jesus and ours.

It points to our death to fleshly dominated appetites and resurrected to a Spirit controlled life

Third it is a statement of loyalty and devotion because we follow Jesus' example (Mt. 3: 11-17).

The next portion of the command is found in the first part of verse 20, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.

III. A Great Promise; 20b. - And lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age.

Such a challenging command demands a great promise, and so it has. Jesus promised to be with us all the days of our life.

THE PROMISE THAT KEEPS US GOING

David Livingstone was a world-renowned doctor/missionary by the time he returned to his native Scotland to address the students at Glasgow University. The previous sixteen years had been spent in the service of God on the continent of Africa. As he stood before those young men and women, the tremendous price exacted of Livingstone was plain to see. More than 27 fevers had coursed through his veins, leaving his body emaciated and ravaged. One arm hung useless at his side, the result of being mangled by a lion.

The core of his message to those young people was: "Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the toil, the hardship, and loneliness of my exile? It was Christ's promise, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end."

What Christ promised to the disciples on the mountain top nearly two thousand years ago is yours today.

The presence of God which Livingstone experienced can be experienced by you today.

The companionship of Jesus Christ is offered to every believer as he or she makes their way through this world.

Jesus by means of His Holy Spirit promised to always be with those fulfilling His Great Commission.

Always means all the days.

Days of strength as well as days of weakness.

Days of success as well as days of failure/joy-affliction/ liberty-temptation/health-sickness/laughter-sadness/wealth-poverty/obedience -disobedience/youth-old age.

The day of new life, new birth, and in the day of physical death.

(Piano)

(Bring young people who are leaving on stage).....

Remember, you will be with Him and He will be with you all the days of your life. You are not alone!

Jesus promises, "*surely I am with you always, to the very end to the age.*"

It sustained David Livingston, and it can sustain you.

Let God be praised for always being there with us, every moment of every day.

The book of Matthew closes with the simple Amen. Amen, let it be, so be it, it is unwaverable, it is unchangeable, steadfast, let it come about!

Just suppose that these last words of Jesus recorded in Matthew are the first words Jesus' will to address to you after your death.

How would you respond if He were to ask you if you obeyed His command to make disciples?

Who could you present to your loving Lord?

Yes it is good to be part of a church and a missionary sending agency that makes disciples, but don't hide the talents and gifts you have, nor lose the opportunities God has given you.

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, therefore beseech the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Don't just enjoy the blessings and presence of Jesus, but comply with His command.

Maybe you don't know the daily presence of Jesus.

Have you ever truly become His disciple?

Listen to His loving voice and take His tender strengthening guiding hand that He is here and now extending to you.

Step out in faith right now and come to Him.

Find rest for your soul and eternal direction for your life.

Come now as the Spirit leads.