



Text: Matthew 28:16-20¹
Title: His Commission Our Mission
Date: September 11, 2011
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

Jesus' "Great Commission"

- his final words – given some time after his resurrection and before his ascension into heaven
- his "marching orders" to his core disciples – the apostles
- BUT the direction isn't only for the apostles – its for all of Jesus' disciples
- the task he gives the apostles is to reach "all nations" with the message of the Gospel of Jesus until the "end of time" – a mission that far surpasses the lifetime of the apostles – in fact, it may well surpass even our lifetime.
- As disciples of Jesus, **this is our mission**

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 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

It is an enormous task! To reach the world with the message about Jesus and to guide people to become disciples of Jesus Christ.
- we are to reach a world that is antagonistic to the message about Jesus – hostile or disinterested

But imbedded in Jesus' commission I see **four profound encouragements!**

I see...

The Imperfect Disciples of Jesus

And I find encouragement in them!

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.

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“Now **the eleven disciples...**” – the Band has been broken!
Cf. Tolkien’s “the fellowship of the ring”

Cf. Matt 26:14, 20, 47 – “**the twelve**”

Cf. Matt 19:28 – Jesus had told his disciples that they would sit on “**twelve thrones**” judging the “**twelve tribes**” (cf. Gen 49:28 twelve tribes of Israel)

Cf. Rev 21:12 New Jerusalem – twelve gates, 12 angels and names of 12 tribes inscribed on the gates
v.14 – the wall of the city rests on **12 foundations** on which are inscribed the names of the **12 apostles**

Cf. Acts 1:15ff – selection of Matthias

- Peter re Judas: “he was **numbered** among us and was **allotted his share** in this ministry.” (v.17)
- “one of these men **must become** with us a witness of the resurrection.” (v.22)
- Matthias chosen by lot “and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” (v.26)

The disciples were aware that they were “incomplete” – they were missing the “12th man”

“And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted.”

The word “doubted” is NOT unbelief – there is a word that Matthew had to hand that he could have used if he meant unbelief
- this word is more akin to “indecision,” or “hesitant” or “uncertain”²

Used only once elsewhere...

Cf. Matthew 14:31 – re Peter when he walked on the water with Jesus

²⁸ And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**” ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” Matthew 14:28-32

² Blomberg, C. (2001). *Vol. 22: Matthew* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (430). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. Hagner, D. A. (2002). *Vol. 33B: Word Biblical Commentary : Matthew 14-28*. Word Biblical Commentary (885). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.



- Peter – walked on water!
 - Then overwhelmed by the magnitude of the situation – couldn't process the wind, the water – I'm walking on water – and in that confusion and hesitation, he began to sink BUT he cried out to Jesus!

Jesus referred to Peter's "little faith" – not to his "lack of faith" – Peter had faith but his faith needed to grow!

In the same way that Peter was overwhelmed by his situation, the disciples who met with Jesus on the mountain in Galilee were trying to process an immense amount of spiritual information. Too much had recently happened for the disciples to assimilate it all easily. They had lost one of their members – they were not complete.

Why did Matthew include this note of uncertainty? What encouragement, what strength would it give to those who read his Gospel? How would it help them to fulfill Jesus' commission?

The lesson: Jesus uses imperfect disciples to fulfill his mission in the world!

Jim Petersen tells the story of Mario, [a friend from South America] with whom he had studied the Bible for four years before Mario became a Christian. The Bible studies reflected the fact that Mario was a Marxist intellectual who'd read all the leading Western philosophers. A couple of years after his conversion, Jim and Mario were reminiscing: "Do you remember what it really was that made me decide to become a Christian?" Mario asked.

Petersen thought of all their Bible studies and philosophical discussions. Mario's reply took him by surprise. "Remember that first time I stopped by your house? We were on our way someplace together, and I had a bowl of soup with you and your family. As I sat there observing you, your wife, and your children, and how you related to each other, I asked myself, 'When will I have a relationship like this with my fiancé?' When I realized that the answer was 'never,' I concluded I had to become a Christian for the sake of my own survival."

Petersen did remember the occasion. He remembered his children behaving badly and his frustration at having to correct them in front of Mario. Yet Mario saw the grace of Christ binding that family together. Years later, Petersen would comment on this incident:

We tend to see the weaknesses and incongruities in our lives, and our reaction is to recoil at the thought of letting outsiders get close enough to see us as we really are. Even if our assessment is accurate, it is my



observation that any Christian who is sincerely seeking to walk with God, in spite of all his flaws, is reflecting something of Christ.

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The success of the mission does not depend upon our competence or our ability or our faith ... it depends on Jesus!

NB. What about you? Old saying: “The world is run by the people who show up.” The mission of Jesus Christ is being fulfilled by “the disciples who show up.”

You don’t have to know everything or be totally together spiritually to be used by Jesus to accomplish his mission – you just have to show up and allow him to use you!

- These imperfect disciples “showed up” in Galilee – Jesus used them to change the world!

The next encouragement I see is...

The Supreme Authority of Jesus

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Lesson: Jesus encourages his disciples by assuring them that He will give them everything they will need to accomplish His mission

“And Jesus came and said to them...”

Jesus approached them – Jesus takes the initiative to approach them – he longs for relationship with us more than we do with him

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

“authority” was given to Jesus by the Father (cf Daniel 7:13-14)

“Authority” – a major theme in Matthew’s Gospel...

Cf. Matt 7:2, 9 taught as one who had authority

Cf. Matt 10:1 over unclean spirits

Cf. Matt 9:6-8 authority to forgive sins – Jesus heals the man who was paralyzed so that people would know he has the authority to forgive sins

Jesus is sending out his disciples under his authority to continue his mission of disciple-making in the world which requires the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins...



NB. John's version of the "Great Commission"...

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." John 20:21-23

- **V.22 "Receive the Holy Spirit."** -- Cf. John 13-17 – the Holy Spirit in the life of the disciple of Jesus

V.23 "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them..." – the preaching of the Gospel of forgiveness of sins!

NB. The preaching of the Gospel is daring, it's bold, it's audacious! We claim that people can become right with God through believing the message of Jesus that we declare. We tell them that their sins are forgiven through believing in Jesus! We tell them that they will rise from the dead! How dare we do so ... we dare because of Jesus!

Only because Jesus has given us the authority to do so can we proclaim the soul saving, life-transforming, heaven-opening Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I see the encouragement of...

The Global Mission of Jesus

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in 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.

Lesson: Jesus keeps his instruction to his disciples simple.

Our entire mission can be summed up in one phrase...

Make disciples everywhere!

Re Paul & Barnabas preaching in the city of Derbe...

"When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith..." Acts 14:21-22

A "disciple" is a "learner"

- adherent of a teacher – there is a loyalty and bond with the teacher
- dedicated to the teaching of the master



- seek to structure their lives around the master's teaching

Three directives to fulfill the command to “make disciples”

“Go....”

- word is more than “walk about” – there is an intentionality in the “going” (cf NIDNTT) – **requires a strategy**
- **“all nations”** – worldwide in scope BUT it begins where you are
Cf. Acts 1:8 Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth

What is our “strategy” for accomplishing the mission of making disciples here and around the world?

- NB. We're doing lots of good things BUT we want to make sure our strategy for disciple-making is clear and that we are faithful to Jesus' commission!

Cf. the Boards meeting to discuss the focus of our work – pray for us

“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

NB. Evangelism – in the NT, baptism followed immediately on profession of faith in Jesus

The sharing of the Gospel is to be done again and again – it's the entry point for disciples

[SHARE the Gospel – created for a relationship with God / we rebelled (SIN) / punishment for sin (DEATH) / God provided a sin-bearer (JESUS) / Accept Jesus as your sin-bearer (BELIEVE) / Sins are forgiven and relationship with God is restored (LIFE)

Cf. Billy Graham's example of the way in which sharing the message of Jesus is to be woven into our lives as disciples

Billy [Graham] was so focused on bringing his message in every venue...that he would somehow always find a way to do it. His use of the microphone check illustrates the intensity of his focus.

The A. Larry Ross firm handled media and public relations for more than twenty-three years for the Graham organization. Ross says, "One of the distinctives of Mr. Graham's ministry has been his ability to make positive points for the gospel in any situation. You can ask Billy Graham how he gets his suits dry-cleaned on the road, and he'll turn it into a gospel witness.



"I cut my teeth in the corporate world before I worked with Mr. Graham," says Ross, "and I set up numerous media interviews. Almost always before a TV interview, they do a microphone check, and they ask the interviewee to say something—anything—so they can adjust the audio settings. Often a corporate executive, for that check, will count to ten, say their ABC's, or recite what he had for breakfast. Mr. Graham would always quote John 3:16—'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'

"When I asked Mr. Graham why he does that, he replied, 'Because that way, if I am not able to communicate the gospel clearly during the interview, at least the cameraman will have heard it.'"

(c) 2011 PreachingToday.com Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham (Zondervan, 2005), pp. 71-72; submitted by Marti Pieper, Charleston, South Carolina

“teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

– a lifetime of learning and growing
- we can't separate believing in Jesus from obeying Jesus – discipleship is an ongoing growth in Christ that begins the moment we believe in him and continues until we see him face to face.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Titus 2:11-14

Saving grace (believing the gospel) and sanctifying grace (taught to obey) cannot be separated!

NT scholar Craig Blomberg puts it this way...

“Evangelism must be holistic. If non-Christians are not hearing the gospel and not being challenged to make a decision for Christ, then the church has disobeyed one part of Jesus’ commission. If new converts are not faithfully and lovingly nurtured in the whole counsel of God’s revelation, then the church has disobeyed the other part. ... the ministries of the church overall must reflect a healthy balance of “outreach” and “inreach.”³

³ Blomberg, C. (2001). *Vol. 22: Matthew* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (432). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.



Finally, I see the encouragement of...

The Abiding Presence of Jesus

I used to think that there was only one command in this portion of the Bible – “make disciples -- But there is one more command...

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

“behold”

“Look at me, people! Eyes here!” – it’s a command

Jesus assures his imperfect disciples of His constant, unbroken presence as they fulfill His mission.

“I am with you”

“I am” – emphatic form, ie. “I myself am” -- ego eimi

“You might be missing the ‘12th’ man – but “I Am” is with you!

“You might be sensing your inadequacy for the mission – but “I am” with you!

Cf. John 13 to 17 – the ministry of the Holy Spirit

“always” – lit. every one of the days

“to the end of the age.” – lit. to full completion of the age – until time is finished, and the job is done!

Cf George Ladd...

God alone, who has told us that this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations, will know when that objective has been accomplished. But I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms of our task; our responsibility is to complete it. So long as Christ does not return, our work is not done. Let us get busy and complete our mission!

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My invitation to you as we begin our year of ministry: Join the rest of us imperfect disciples as we seek to fulfill Jesus’ mission!

- **Invitation to Prayer**
- **Final Song: All to Us**
- **Benediction**