

Last Words: Sent Matthew 28:16-20

INTRODUCTION

Please turn in your Bible to **Matthew 28:16-20**. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus have already occurred. All that is left for Matthew to report is the promised post-resurrection reunion with His disciples. **Verses 16-17** reports (read verses). Then Jesus came to them and issued what we call **The Great Commission** (read verses 18-20). Feel the tension between the **setting** of the Great Commission in **verses 16-17** and the **statement** of it in **verses 18-20**.

When the disciples saw Jesus walking up this Galilean hillside, they fell on their faces in worship. But some of them did not really believe it was actually Jesus. Yet Jesus entrusted His mission to these men. This does not seem to be a good way to begin a worldwide movement. But the Lord chose weak, fallible, and sinful people to be His ambassadors. With no money or buildings or programs, He sent the disciples to be His witnesses in the world. The early church was so committed to this mission that in **Acts 17:6** the people of Thessalonica said, *“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.”* The gospel still has the power to turn the world upside down. And the Lord is still willing to use ordinary people like you and me to be His witnesses. **But we must stay on mission.** We must obey the marching orders of the church. We must not let the Great Commission become the “Great Omission.”

You and I have a mission: **we are to make _____ and serve as _____ to God’s activity in this world.**

We have been called to know God and make Him known. As followers of Christ, we have been called to be on mission with God. Why should we be committed to this mission? **2 REASONS**

- **Reason #1: it reveals the _____ of God**

A commitment to God’s mission reveals the heart of God. When you and I are involved in God’s rescue mission, we acknowledge that God is at work in our world and desires that people enjoy Him forever.

A few years ago, Henry Blackaby & Avery Willis wrote a book entitled **‘On Mission with God: Living God’s Purpose for His Glory.’** In the foreword of this book, the publisher writes: *“God isn’t interested in giving Christians a missions experience. He’s interested in Christians being on mission with Him. The distinction is more than subtle. It’s earth-shattering! Fully comprehended, this concept has the potential to radically alter and revitalize the church today. God reveals Himself to us so we can adjust our lives to His. As we experience God on mission, we do not choose our assignments. He does.”*

Why should we be committed to God’s mission? Reason #1: it reveals the heart of God...

- **Reason #2: it’s our God-given _____**

Jesus said, *“This is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”* (John 17:3-4) In **John 17:18**, He says, *“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”* **“As”** conveys intention. Believers are an extension of the ministry of God in reaching out to a sinful world with the life-changing, life-transforming, God-glorifying message of Jesus Christ. We have been chosen with a purpose: to declare. We are heralds (messengers) with good news...with great news!

Back to Matthew 28:16-20. These verses contain Jesus’ last words. If you’re familiar with your Bible you know that the words found in **vv. 18-20**.

Now in these three verses I find **three great things**. First,

I. A great _____ (Matthew 28:18)

Verse 18 is a **claim**, not a **commission**. But the **commission** rests on this **claim**. If **verse 18** is not true, **verses 19-20** are meaningless. Before the Lord states the Great Commission, He establishes His divine authority to command it. It is because of His sovereign power that His followers are to have the attitude of complete, humble submission to His will.

Please note the word **'authority'**. It's not merely **power or might** (*dunamis*), such as a great conqueror might claim, but **'authority'** (*exousia*), as something which is His by right, conferred upon Him by One who has the right to bestow it (cf. **Rev. 2:27**). **Exousia** (authority) *refers to the freedom and right to speak and act as one pleases*. Jesus has all power. But He claims more than that here. **Power** is the ability to get things done. **Authority** is jurisdiction, freedom of action, or legal right to use power. **Power** is ability, but **authority** is the right to use that power as you desire. **For instance**, in the sports world, an athlete may have the power to move the ball, but the referee has the authority to restrict, penalize, or disqualify that athlete's ability. **The athlete may have great skill, fan support, and a big contract, but the referee has the whistle. And so, the referee's authority trumps the athlete's power.** And the authority that the referee has in the sports world is the authority that Jesus claims over the entire universe – except no protest, commissioner, or instant replay can overrule the authority of Christ.

As we go, we are to _____ that Jesus is the risen Savior with all authority to _____ sin or _____ it (v.18).

We share the good news with real people facing real problems. We provide the real answer in Jesus Christ. The gospel has both earthly and heavenly dimensions. The mission of the church succeeds because of Jesus Christ. The victory of the church is based on her ability to appeal to the ultimate authority in the universe.

Secondly,

II. A great _____ (Matthew 28:19-20a)

The command in this verse is what? Is it to 'go'? NO! The main verb which reflects the command is translated by the phrase **'make disciples.'** You and I are to be used of God in reaching out to others. The way we do this is indicated by 3 participles (on going action). **'Go'** – **literally means as you go or going.** This means that you and I are called to build relationships with those who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior. You and I are expected to communicate the gospel to those who have not established a relationship with God. The word **'go'** can be best understood as an assumption (having gone) than as a command. **'Baptizing'** – **the outward display of an inward reality.** In the context of the Great Commission, baptism is synonymous with salvation. Baptism presupposes repentance from sin and faith in Christ. Baptism is the outward act of identification with Christ. **'Teaching'** – **please note the emphasis on 'observe = obey' not just simply information.** The church is to be given to a teaching ministry that instills principles that govern behavior; Christ-centered principles that lead to Christ-honoring living. Jesus says that we must teach people to live out the teachings of our faith. **VANCE HAVNER said: "You have not really learned a commandment until you have obeyed it. Nothing clarifies doctrine like doing. And each new thing learned becomes a millstone until it becomes a milestone."**

As we go, we are to _____ that Jesus is the risen Savior for all _____ (v.19).

Salvation is for everyone. All people need to be saved (**Rom 3:23; 6:23**). Whether it's the masses at the day in Pentecost (**Acts 2**); the influential Ethiopian in **Acts 8**; the educated and religious Saul of Tarsus (Paul) in **Acts 9**; the moral and merciful Cornelius in **Acts 10**; or the son of a Baptist deacon and pastor such as me, we all need a relationship with Jesus Christ.

*In these verses, we find a great claim, a great commission
and...thirdly,*

III. A great _____ (Matthew 28:20b)

The GREAT COMMISSION ends with the divine assurance of the personal and perpetual presence of Christ. **The gospel according to Matthew ends not with a command but with a promise, or rather a fact.** Jesus will be with His disciples as they carry out His will. **This is His great commitment. Listen. Immanuel is still God with us (1:23; cf. 18:20).**

*As we go, we are to take _____ that Jesus is the
risen Savior for all _____ (v.20).*

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? If not careful, the church has the tendency to become too fixated on herself rather than fulfilling the mandate given to her. This community of faith must be outwardly focused. You and I must fulfill our God-given responsibility of representing God in a godless society – **2 Cor 5:17-21**. The difference between an inwardly focused community of faith and an outwardly-focused community of faith is the difference between "Churchianity" and "Christianity."

The church does its mission with the power of Christ and the presence of Christ. The omnipotent One of **verse 18** is the omnipresent One of **verse 20**. The transcendent Lord, who is above us, is also the ever-present Savior who is with us. Not only is divine sovereignty on our side, it's also by our side. He who has all power is with us at all times.