

The Great Commission



I Am Sent

Matthew 28:16-20

If you have your bibles, go ahead and open to Matthew chapter 28 as we finish our sermon series for the month of June, entitled 'I Am Sent.' We talked about how Jesus realized the Father sent Him, so He sent us. As we are sent, we realize that we have a great call, a great commandment, and this morning we're going to see that we also have a great commission. If you don't mind, go ahead and stand with me as we read from Matthew's gospel in chapter 28 beginning with verse 16. Instead of you listening to me read this morning, we are going to all read this text together.

Scripture

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Prayer)

Father, as we read this passage of Scripture together as Your congregation, Father, we thank you that we don't live by the philosophical pursuit of men, but by the divine revelation of You to us through Your Son Jesus Christ, and You have given us an accurate inspired account through what we call the written Word, the Bible. Thank you Father that my granddaddy, a long, long time ago, when he talked about Baptists being a people of the book, I understood what book he was talking about. He was talking about the Bible. Father, we thank You for this moment, what a responsibility you've given me as the pastor/teacher, to get to explain this passage of Scripture as we finish out this series called 'I Am Sent.' Father, now don't let us sit here and just be a listener, a hearer only, but let us be doers of Your Word. Don't ever let me be a speaker only, but let me be a doer of the Word as well. Father, we ask for Your anointing because this would be just a futile physical exercise unless You show up and Your Holy Spirit anoints me as the speaker and the congregation as the listener. Father, we ultimately want Your interpretation of Scripture to be revealed this morning, so we submit to You the best way we know how. Father, we thank You for this privilege of worshipping You together as we listen to Your Word. It's in Your Son's precious name we pray, amen.

There were many accounts in Scripture that we could have used this morning to talk about the great commission, but we've chosen Matthew's gospel. If you will remember, Matthew is ending his gospel by the Sabbath day ending and the first day of a brand new week dawning, and the ladies go to the tomb. When they get to the tomb, they do not find Jesus, but find these heavenly messengers who say to them that He is not here, come see the place where they laid Him. Then those messengers tell those ladies to quickly go tell His disciples that He is not dead but risen from the dead. As they leave the tomb, they meet Jesus and they don't recognize Him. Jesus greets them and He gives them instructions to go tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee on a mountain. Then we have what's called fake news. We have this incident of how the guards went back to tell the Jewish authorities what had actually happened, and they bribed them to tell a lie

and publish fake news. We don't know exactly how much time has elapsed, but now we have the disciples in Galilee, on a mountain, and they are waiting for Jesus. Can you imagine? You thought He was dead, because He was dead. Now, you hear the news that He is alive, and Matthew says He wants to meet with you. Not eleven apostles, but eleven disciples, they're on the mountain. I don't know about you, but I believe they're looking in every direction. They can't wait for Jesus to show up. All of a sudden, if you're reading this you get the idea that they see Jesus far off, and as He comes closer, the Bible says they fall to their knees and they blow Him a kiss. They worship Him. That affection that's welling up inside them when they sense the risen Lord getting closer, they worship Him. But then we read, "But some doubted." If you look this word, doubt, up in a Greek dictionary, it literally means 'to hesitate.' Some commentaries believe that possibly there are more than just the eleven here. When Paul talked in 1 Corinthians 15 about those five hundred who saw Jesus that, possibly, with the eleven there are the five hundred, and while the eleven are worshipping, some of the five hundred are hesitating to worship. Matthew keeps it to the eleven. In the midst of those eleven, there are a few of the guys who couldn't just break out in affection yet toward Jesus because they weren't sure it was really Him. All of a sudden, He is right there with them. Matthew immediately records these words of Jesus, "All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And behold, I will be with you always to the end of the age."

When Jesus tells the disciples that all authority has been given to Him, He is using a word here that combines two thoughts in our English minds. There are some people who have the right to rule and reign, but do not have the might to rule and reign. Then there are some people who have the might to rule and reign, but do not have the right to rule and reign. Jesus is using a word here that combines the thought of the right to rule and reign and the might to rule and reign to let His disciples know that all right and all might in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, and He is getting ready to commission them to do something. He wants them to

know the reason He is commissioning them is on the basis of the authority that He has.

The book of Revelation gives us a beautiful picture of what Jesus is talking about here. When Jesus talks about having all authority given to Him in heaven and earth, what it is speaking about is this; the book of Revelation chapters 4 and 5 teaches that when Jesus Christ died on that cross, was victoriously raised again, appeared to His disciples, and then ascended back to the Father's right hand side, He took a scroll from the Father that was the title deed to the earth. No one had been worthy to execute God's judgment on fallen creation until this moment. Now Jesus holds the title deed in His hand, He gets ready to unloose these seven seals, and the first seal He unlooses is a rider on a white horse. He's got a crown on his head and a bow in his hands. He rides all over the earth to conquer and to keep conquering. The Bible uses a military metaphor here to talk about the role of the church when Jesus gets back to the Father's right hand side, and that role is that God has called us to conquer the earth by making disciples of all nations. So, Jesus says based on the authority of all authority being given to Me in heaven and earth, therefore...at Hardin, when we see a therefore, we always stop and see what it's there for. This 'therefore' is connecting what is going to be said to what has just been said, so based on the authority that Jesus has the right and the might to rule and reign as the sovereign Lord of the universe, here is what He says to us, the church. Make disciples.

If you're like me, and I'm not being critical, I was raised in a small country church and we cut our teeth on the King James Version of the Bible. How many of you were like me? As a kid growing up, I heard this verse quoted over and over again, and I heard about how we were supposed to go and teach all nations, baptize, and then teach again how we were to observe all things. I always had this idea there were three or four things we were supposed to be doing as a church. Then I began to realize, when you study this, there is only one verb in this commission, not three or four. The word, go, is not a verb. The word, baptizing, is not a verb. The word, teaching, is not a verb. They are participles. There is only one verb, and that is make disciples. It's an imperative; it's a command. Imperatives are commands to

action. You give somebody a command, and you put an exclamation mark at the end of it. As the church, we not only have a great call and a great commandment, we have a great commission, and that commission is to make disciples. Who is to make disciples? Disciples make disciples. Matthew is really clear, he doesn't have eleven apostles gathered together; he has eleven disciples gathered together. What does Jesus say to the eleven disciples? He says make disciples. This is why it's woven into the DNA of Hardin, "We are growing disciples who make disciples." Where do you think we got that? We got it from the Bible. My granddaddy Bogard, being a Baptist, taught me that we are a people of the book. Therefore, what's our commission? Our commission is to make disciples.

Now, at Ledbetter, my KJV said, "Teach all nations." Why does my ESV say, "Make disciples?" It is because there are two different Greek words for the word teach. One word means to teach, and it refers to just information that is being passed to and fro between people, but that is not the word that is used here in this passage by Jesus. The word that Jesus uses here that is translated 'make disciples' is a word that, first of all, has the characteristic that means to learn from. The second characteristic means you attach yourself to the one you're learning from. That's why some people see disciples as learners, pupils, or students. I can tell you that during my days of being in school that I was the student of some teachers. There were some teachers when I just sat in the classroom. But there are other teachers when I sit in the classroom and I hear what they taught, but can't attach to them. Do you know what I'm talking about? When you become attached to the one who is teaching you, that person, in their person not just in their teaching, begin to influence you. That's at the core of this word, but watch this. There's another characteristic to this word. Not only do you learn from, not only do you attach yourself to, but you become a follower of their teachings, their doctrines, and their conduct. Not just what your teacher believes, but you become a follower of how your teacher behaves. So really, this word, make disciples, is referring to eleven followers of Jesus met Him on a mountain, and He told them to make followers of all nations.

This word, nations, isn't referring to people who live in certain locations that have borders. No, this isn't referring to a geographical landmass. It is referring to the people in those geographical borders. It is talking about tribes, races. Matthew writing as a Jew, to the Jews, tells the Jewish church that we're not just going to make disciples out of people like you; we are going to make followers of Me out of all people. Then He tells them how they are going to do this. They are going to do it as they go. Look at these three participles with me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. Notice one is punctiliar action and the other is continual action. It just doesn't say, going, baptizing, and teaching. He says as you go. Today, if Jesus was here, He could probably use the present tense because we are the society that's mastered continually going, amen. But there used to be a group of people who actually stopped and enjoyed where they were before they went on to the next place. Jesus says, as you go.

This word, go, means that you move from one location to another location in a different direction, so it means while you are here, then move to here, you are supposed to be making disciples. When you move from here to there, you are supposed to be making disciples. When you go there back to here, you are supposed to be making disciples. If you're a Baptist, you can talk about us Baptists, but if you're not a Baptist, don't talk about us. For years, we Baptists in missionary churches have interpreted this to mean that some of us will be called to go from Hardin to Malawi, or Thailand, Brazil, Nicaragua, or Arizona and make disciples. Across our southern Baptist convention, we pray for and support through our offerings and cooperative program those men and women who have been called out of America to go to other nations, and we think we're fulfilling the great commission of Jesus. That is part of this, but it's not all of this. Do you know what this is talking about? When you leave your house in the morning and go down to the coffee shop, you are supposed to be making disciples. When you leave the coffee shop to go into work, you are supposed to be making disciples. When you leave work and go coach that little league ball team, or sit in those stands with other parents, you are supposed to be making disciples. When you come back home of a night

and look at your family, you are supposed to be making disciples. Occasionally, some of us will find ourselves in another state or country, and we are supposed to be making disciples. There are no borders in the church of Jesus Christ when it comes to making disciples. It is easy for some of us, collectively, to be in a church that's missionary and is making disciples and you never make a disciple. You can say I go to a disciple making church. But this wasn't given to eleven people collectively; it was collectively given to eleven individuals who were given the mandate and the commission to make disciples. If you are a part of Hardin Baptist Church and you are a follower of Christ, you've been commissioned by Jesus who is the sovereign Lord of the universe, who has the right and the might to tell you what to do, that your commission is to make disciples. He has given that commission to me as well, and He has the right and the might to do it. So while I have a great call, and a great command, I also have a great commission.

Would you just think for a minute about your traffic pattern? Maybe it is the guys who sit and talk with you in the mornings, or the five people that work around you, the parents of your ball team, the parents of the kids you teach, the associates you have, your employers, or your employees. How many of them are followers of Christ because you personally know and you have engaged in a conversation with them about Christ? This word, go, is saying engage. Jesus never meant for the church to build buildings and expect the people to come to us so that we could tell them! He put His church in every culture, and He wants us to engage.

Once we engage and a person turns from sin, puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, they become a follower of Christ, we have another verbal adjective, another modifier that tells us about making disciples. Do you know what we do to everyone who becomes a follower of Christ? We baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We immerse them. We dip them. We submerge them. We plunge them under the water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Why? Because that's how a follower of Christ identifies their faith. I've been in a lot of churches that's missed it. I've been in a lot of churches where they believe the way you identify your faith is to get out of your seat, walk an aisle, tell

the preacher you got saved, and the church votes on you to receive you as a member. Somehow, you just identified your faith. That's not how you identify your faith in the New Testament. You identify your faith in the New Testament if you are a follower of Christ, you go down into the water, under the water, to say that my faith is no longer in myself, but my faith is in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You go under the water and come up out of the water, and you are letting everybody there know you have no trust in you. Your trust is totally in the shed blood of Jesus Christ on a cross, and you are saved by grace through faith alone. That immersion, that being dipped, that being plunged under the water testifies that you believe the person you were that was alive to sin and dead to God is now dead to sin and alive to God. We're burying that old person, and when you go under that water because of your faith in Christ, you're saying the old man is buried. When you come up, your saying that I am alive and raised from the dead, and I'm a new person. I'm now following Christ! It's kind of unfortunate, but fortunate I guess, that in 1611 when the Bible was being translated by the King James translators and they came to this word, Baptizo, they didn't know what to do with it because the guy who was paying for the project, the King, had been poured. You know that, right, and they've got this word in the Greek language that means immerse, dip, plunge, or submerge. They wanted to be paid, so do you know what they did? They invented a new English word. They took the Greek letters and gave them English equivalence, and invented the word, baptize, or baptism. That's kind of fortunate, because if they hadn't done that, you know what would have happened; you wouldn't have been known as a Baptist, you would have been known as a dipper. You would have been known as a plunger. "I go down there where they dunk." Are you a follower of Christ? Have you took the plunge to let everybody know that your faith is not in you, but your faith is in Jesus Christ? Were you baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Yes, we give great glory to Jesus for salvation, but the Bible teaches that salvation is a work of God, God the Father in choosing you before the foundation of the world, predestining you to be like Jesus Christ, accepting you on the basis of Christ. Then Christ went to a cross, and on that cross, He died to redeem you and forgive you of your sins. But without the work

of the Holy Spirit applying salvation to you, you would still be dead in your sin because you would have never trusted in Christ without the Holy Spirit of God moving on your dead soul, quickening you, making it so that you could come to saving faith in Christ. So our baptism is a baptism in the name of God, the Father, who is a triune God; one is essence, one in nature, but clearly three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Are you a follower of Him? If you are a follower of Him, then you'll get baptized. When you get the privilege of making disciples, you won't just try to get someone to be a follower, you'll instruct them in baptism.

Then he says we teach them. We engage them by going, we identify them by baptizing them, and then we educate them by teaching them. Watch this. For years, I just heard me quote this, I read Matthew's words, and I thought what Matthew was saying was I am supposed to teach them all things that Jesus has commanded. That's not what he says. Look at your Bible. That's not what he says. We're supposed to teach them, the ones who we just baptized, who are now followers of Christ, who we engage at work, at the ballpark, at home, wherever, now we are supposed to teach them to observe all things. Whoa...I don't just teach you, cross my arms, and leave it up to you. I teach you to observe. This word, observe, means to guard. In the biblical world, it was used of a guard who was guarding a prison cell and he kept his eye on the prisoner. It was used later to talk about a warden who oversaw the whole prison system. This word literally means to teach people to keep, to guard, to obey all things, not just some things, not just the easy things, all things that He's commanded us, wow! That's why at Hardin we ask you a lot if you are a growing disciple who's making disciples. Are you a follower of Christ? Are you learning from Him? Are you attaching yourself to Him? Are you following His beliefs, and are you, in your life, behaving in all situations like He would behave?

I learned the principles of following many years ago as a young pastor in this church. This church voted to allow Celisa and me to go to an evangelism conference in Lexington, KY, and we went. I had never been to that church, not sure I had even been to Lexington before, but I knew Celisa's brother was a freshman student at UK. In talking to him and telling him we were coming, he told me that he would take us to the church when

we got there. We preached here that Sunday morning, left and drove up that Sunday afternoon, and got to Lexington, but we had forgotten that you lose an hour when you go east. So we got there right on time, not to the church, but to where Trace was meeting us. I don't know if you were at Hardin when I was first here, but let me remind you that at that time I drove a family car because I had a wife. I didn't have a backseat driver; I had a side seat driver. I drove a Buick Skylark, four door, four cylinder. When you mashed the gas, it went waaaaahhh, very slow to pick up speed, zero to sixty in like twenty seconds. Trace at that time was driving a red Fiero sports car. They didn't make them very long. It was a stick shift, big engine. You let out on the clutch and eeerrrrrrr, for miles! We have no time for pleasantries, we pull up, he's in a red Fiero, I'm in the Buick Skylark, and he's going to take us to Tate's Creek Baptist Church. I had no idea where I was going, but I suddenly realize that I'm following Trace and as a follower of Trace, my position is second. We're on Lexington Avenue, I believe, and he lets out on the clutch, eeerrrrrr, across two lanes of traffic, across that middle section, over to the next one, turns left, and I'm still looking right and left to see if cars are coming. When I mash the gas, go across the two lanes, and turn left, and when I turn, the honest truth, two tractor-trailers have gotten in between me and Trace. So I never let off the accelerator, I just go over to the other lane, go around those two tractor-trailers because I realize not only is my position second, but if I'm going to follow him, the person I'm following must be seen at all times by me. I can't see him because something is in between me and him, so I deal with that, I go around it. I get on his bumper when he stops at a red light, and about the time I stop, the light changes and he turns left and takes us through the residential area of Lexington KY, and it was supposedly a shortcut. We went right, left, right, left, right, left, finally, I was convinced he did not know where he was going. I really did this; I saw a man outside working in his yard and I pulled over to the side while Trace went on, got out of the Buick Skylark, went around, stopped the man from doing what he was doing, and I said, "Sir, I'm looking for Tate's Creek Baptist Church, can you tell me where it is?" I'll never forget this; he just pointed over his shoulder, and kept doing what he was doing. My eyes followed his point, and I saw the steeple above some trees. I was almost there, though I

didn't know it. When I got back in the car, I bet I didn't go fifty yards, and I came to another avenue and there was the church, there was the red Fiero. I just went across the road, pulled in and parked, and Trace jumped out of his car and ran over to my car. I rolled the window down, he stuck his head in my window and looked at me with a big grin on his face and said, "Do you think you can get back?" If I had have had more money than I did and I had one of those electric buttons in my car instead of a hand crank, I would have zipped his head up in that window! But it wouldn't have looked good, **"Baptist Pastor Strangles Brother-in-law in Parking Lot of Church."** As I got out of my car walking into the church with Celisa, it was as if the Holy Spirit of God said to me, *when you follow Me, your position must always be second. You must see Me at all times, and your path will be My path. Whether you believe you're on the right path or not, follow My path and know I will never ask you if you know how to get back.* He doesn't want us to go back!

Can you imagine the weight of this on your shoulders? There are eleven of you and there's a big world out there, you haven't been outside of the borders of your country, and you've been commissioned to make disciples of all nations. I kind of believe as I read the Bible that they start looking at each other going, does He think we can do this? How in the world are we going to? Then the Bible says He says, "...and behold..." This word, behold, is a demonstrative particle. If you listened in grammar class in English, you know what a demonstrative particle is. It is one of those words that will call attention to something by using externals to call attention. When Jesus says and behold, He has just said all authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth, as you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things that I've commanded you, and behold...Hey guys! Look at me! Every one of you; look at me! That is what this word, behold, means. Sorry I had to do that. Jesus didn't say, and behold passively. He said get your eye off each other. For a minute, get your eye off what I told you before, and look at Me! "I am with you always to the end of the age." Did you catch that? Listen to this; Matthew doesn't end his gospel with an ascension. He doesn't end his gospel with Jesus leaving the church. If you

have been at Hardin very long, you know Bro Ricky believes this; the four gospels are not diaries about the life of Christ. They are actual events that happened in the life of Christ, but each gospel writer has a purpose for writing, and Matthew is writing to the Jewish people to present Jesus as the King. When he begins his gospel, he begins it with the birth of this little baby, but the whole birth announcement is about who He is, and He is Immanuel, God with us! So the gospel of Matthew begins with this baby being born who will be God with us, then He calls a group of disciples who will follow Him, and everywhere they went, they had God with them! I don't know about you, but I wouldn't be afraid of very many things if I knew I had God with me! Matthew ends his gospel the same way, not with an ascension of Jesus leaving the church, but with Jesus assuring the church that as you take Me to the nations, as you talk about Me on break, as you talk about Me at the store, as you talk about Me to the teller, as you talk about Me to the team, as you talk about Me to your classmates, I am with you! Hey, we don't work for God; we get to work with God. He's commissioned us and He says everywhere you go, as you engage people, know that I will be with you.

When you read the other gospels and the book of Acts, we know that Jesus did leave the disciples, He went back to heaven, and He sit on the Father's right hand side. But He promised it would be to their advantage that He, God, not dwell with them in a body, but He would take His seat in heaven, be our great high priest, and send the third person of the godhead, the Holy Spirit, into our hearts and lives. When He came upon us, He would clothe us with power! Get this picture. Here's the church, very average, very normal, kind of like Clark Kent, then you put that cape on. You know the rest of the story. Here's the church, very normal, very average, until we're clothed with the power from high, the presence of God's Holy Spirit. When that cape of God comes upon us, we know God is with us and He gives us boldness to make disciples everywhere we are, and then baptize them and teach them everything He has commanded us. Why? Because I'm a follower of Christ and I've been baptized, and I'm trying to keep all of His commandments. Therefore as a follower, I've been told to make followers, and you've been told to make followers as a follower. Now, here's the question. Are you a follower of Christ? I didn't

ask if you go to church. I didn't even ask if you were saved. Are you a follower of Christ? Are you learning from Him? Are you attached to Him? Do you believe what He believes? Do you behave like He behaved? If you're not, we want to give you the opportunity to be a follower of Christ. If you've been saved, we're going to ask you to step out for believer's baptism. If you're not part of a church somewhere where you are serving, we are going to ask you, if this is where the Lord is leading you, to come be a part of this body. Are you teaching? Are you making disciples? How many people can you name right now that you're influencing with the gospel because you know they do not know Christ? You've got two, three, four, and five people in your mind right now, right? Do you realize you are where you are because of them, so that you can make disciples? Some of us need to pray for ourselves because we have been failing to carry out the commission. Some of us are growing disciples who want to commit to making disciples. Some of us need to pray for two or three people on our hearts. This church believes we are growing disciples who make disciples. We want the DNA of Hardin to be we are growing disciples who make disciples. We aren't just going to start in another country; we are going to start in our own county, city, and life. God bless you.