

# The Mission Mandate

Matthew 28:16-20

## 1. Introduction.

- a. In light of Jesus calling His first disciples in Luke 5:1-11, I want to remind us of that nature of true discipleship. It is the mandate of the Church given by Jesus. Therefore, it is to be the heartbeat of this church.
  - i. We saw the radical nature of discipleship – “they left everything.”
  - ii. Being a follower of Jesus is not a hobby, religion, or something to which you merely intellectually assent. Rather, it is something far more radical that requires a reshaping of your entire life.
- b. In light of the new year I want us to reflect on one of the clearest passages on discipleship. This is the calling and mandate for this church, and every individual who makes up this church.

## 2. Context and Background (16-17).

- a. The disciples come to a mountain which Jesus has designated.
  - i. Whenever Jesus taught from a mountain in the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew is communicating something critical. Jesus’ greatest teachings always came while on a mountain.
    1. Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7).
    2. Mount of Transfiguration (ch. 17).
    3. The Olivet Discourse (chs. 24-25).
    4. The Great Commission (ch. 28).
  - ii. Our passage is just before His ascent to heaven, and He gives His final commission for the disciples (and the future Church).
- b. Some of the disciples worship, and yet some are doubtful at the risen Christ (17).
  - i. This “doubt” is interesting, considering Jesus is standing before them in the flesh.

1. This is not the word for unbelief. Rather, it carries the idea of wavering in uncertainty. It is the idea of trepidation, or a slowness to trust.
  2. In other words, it is not saying they are not believers. Rather, they are figuring things out, and have trepidation over the implications of what a resurrected Christ now means.
- ii. The point within the context of the Great Commission is that some are going to be mightily used by Christ, and yet others will not. Some will be slow to act because they are not being truly controlled by the reality of what a risen Christ now means for the world.
1. This is vital to understand, as Jesus is now going to give instruction regarding His Great Commission mandate.
  2. Furthermore, He is going to give some reason for why every Christian should not waver in doubt, as they seek to take great risk for the spread of the Kingdom. For it is why He has left us here.
- iii. In light of this, I want to show three things from this text that I want us to believe and do this year.
3. The Great Commission Proper (18-20).
- a. I want us to rest in the authority of Jesus Christ (18).
    - i. The authority of Christ is constant theme in the Gospel of Matthew.
      1. Notice the universality of His authority – “all authority in heaven and on earth.” This statement pretty well covers everything. There is no aspect of creation over which Christ does not possess supreme authority.
      2. Again, understanding this truth is going to be very important for how you will be used by Christ in terms of the mission (c.f., v. 17). Will you be a worshiper (i.e., within the context, a disciple-maker), or will you be a doubter (i.e., impotent in terms of the mission).
        - a. True worship is the reality of becoming more and more conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

- b. You become most like Jesus, not when you learn and profess certain things, but when you faithfully pick up His baton of discipling the nations (c.f., Phil. 2 – Jesus left the comfort of heaven for the purpose of going on mission to seek and save the lost).
  - 3. Notice the repetition of the term, “all.” It is driving home the pervasiveness of His authority, and due to the extent of His mission. It is to be a global mission.
- ii. Categories of authority.
  - 1. He demonstrates authority over sickness and disease.
  - 2. He possesses authority over the demons, Satan, and all evil forces.
  - 3. He exercises in authority over the power of sin.
  - 4. He stands in authority over creation and nature.
  - 5. He sits in authority over every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.
    - a. Dan. 7:13-14.
    - b. Acts 17:23-26.
- iii. Further, He not only possesses complete power, but He also possesses the right and authority to exercise that power.
  - 1. What good would all the power in the universe be, if you did not also possess the right to exercise that power?
  - 2. He answers to no one but Himself – total sovereignty (Psa. 115:2-3).
- iv. The reason I take the time to rehearse this for us is because when it comes to the Great Commission, this is the truth that Jesus is using to fuel and motivate His mission.
- v. So when it comes to the difference between worshipers and doubters (v. 17), it comes down to whether or not a person is truly controlled by this truth.

1. Is it knowledge and theory for you, or an all-consuming reality that is driving you?
2. Why have people been willing to make such radical, risk-taking sacrifices for the cause of the kingdom throughout the history of the Church? Because they believe something. And what do they believe? They believe that Jesus is truly sitting on the throne, and possesses absolute authority over every aspect of His creation.
3. A real live trust in the authority of Christ always fuels radical mission. And until we get this, then we will be minimally useful for the cause of the kingdom.

b. Trust in His Method (19-20a).

- i. There are so many methods and techniques to build the Church these days, but Jesus has one—make disciples. It is the only effort He has promised to bless.
  1. Notice, however, that making a disciple does not mean making converts.
  2. The goal is not to get people to raise a hand, say a prayer, or even assent to certain truths.
  3. Rather, it is the task of calling a person to abandon their self-identity, and take on the identity and mission of Jesus Christ.
- ii. What a disciple is not:
  1. It is not one who merely professes Jesus as Lord.
  2. It is not one who merely self-identifies as a follower of Christ.
  3. It is not a religious conformer.
  4. It is not one who has merely found community (or friendship) among the true church.
  5. It is not one who merely likes hearing truth and sound doctrine.
  6. It is not one willing to give a lot of money to the church.

7. These things are certainly true of all true disciples, but they are not what identifies a true disciple.

iii. What a disciple is:

1. A person on mission, who is engaged in the very active process of making more disciples.
2. By definition, a true disciple is busy making disciple-making disciples.
3. They are a person gripped by the reality that anything which gets in the way of this process (in their life) must go away.
4. They are a person who understands that nothing else in this life comes with a promise. Jesus promised to build His Church; so any other pursuit will ultimately prove to be futile. It is the only effort that will have eternal permanency. A true disciple is driven by this conviction, and makes all decisions in light of it.
5. This is why Christians are free to make risky decisions. They are not controlled by comfort and pragmatics, but the promise of Jesus to build His Church.
6. In light of this, why do we do what we do? Why do we make the decisions we make? If we are true disciples, then what is the missiological, disciple-making reason, for why we do anything we do? (e.g., homes, careers, etc.).

iv. How do we make disciples?

1. Going.
  - a. Jesus never waits for the seekers to come to Him, but He always goes to the lost.
  - b. What does this look like in your life? Are you content to be a mere sender? Or are you first (and foremost) a goer?
2. Baptizing.
  - a. Baptism is central to what it means to be a Christian. It is the first command to obey, once you profess Jesus as Lord.

- b. In baptism you are identifying with Jesus as Lord. It is a public declaration that you are dying to self, and taking up the mission of the Trinitarian God.
- c. It is a symbol that you have died to the old man, and have risen to new life in Jesus Christ.
- d. It is a symbol that you have been washed and purified in the blood of Christ.
- e. It is a symbol that you have been immersed into the Spirit of God, and therefore, the very body of Jesus Christ—the Church. It is a wonderful picture of your new identity in Jesus!
- f. In fact, the NT does not recognize a true convert apart from baptism. Baptism does not save. There is no saving grace conveyed in the act of being immersed. However, baptism is tightly connected with the conversion experience. Various demonstrations of this in Acts: 2, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19.

### 3. Teaching.

- a. Making disciples is synonymous with making obeyers.
  - b. This is a present tense participle. It is to be an on-going work as long as a person is alive.
  - c. Notice the purpose statement (“to obey”). It is not mere teaching. You are not simply passing along right information. Rather, it is teaching, but for the purpose of obeying that teaching. Any teaching that falls short of moving a person toward action is a failed teaching.
  - d. This means that anyone who claims to be a disciple must begin to view themselves as a teacher. They do not formally need to stand behind a pulpit, but they do need to lead a life that regularly gathers people around them for the purpose of instructing them in both word and deed.
- c. Bank on His promise to provide everything you may need for faithful mission (20).

- i. Our translations are vague, but the term, “always,” is literally, “each and every day.”
- ii. The first time I translated this verse, it landed on me as a tacit rebuke. This is a promise that few depend upon because so few are actively engaged in the discipleship process each and every day. The reality is that few of us need His presence and power every day to fulfill this task because we are not doing this every day.
- iii. As a church, I want us to be so sold-out to the mission that this promise becomes a very real need in our lives. I want us to live at such a high level of desperation that we actually start to see God’s faithfulness to this promise. I want us to be that radical.

#### 4. Conclusion.

- a. I have given very little practical application.
- b. This will look very different in each of our lives, as God has placed all of us in separate, unique contexts.
- c. The way this works out for a stay-at-home mom must look very different than a person who goes into an office for nine hours a day.
- d. There is no magic method or formula. We have three non-negotiables (go, baptize, teach). Beyond that, we are free to make radical decisions for the mission.
- e. So may we embrace our calling as missionaries. Let us count the cost and endure hardship for the sake of the mission. And may we see God do some significant things in our day. This is our privilege.

### **Small Group Questions:**

1. Have each person name the unbeliever they prayed for this week, and engaged this week?
2. Have each person in the group name a person they are actively discipling, or are actively being disciple by? If no one, what is preventing them from doing this?
3. Questions to make you think more intentionally about your life, and the reason God has left you on this earth:
  - a. What needs to go away in your life so that you can become an effective discipler?
  - b. What is the disciple-making reason you live where you live?
  - c. What is the disciple-making reason you work where you work?
  - d. What is the disciple-making reason you organize your day as you do?
  - e. If a future church-planter asked you to move with them to start a church where the Gospel is needed, how would you answer? Why?