

For the Fame of His Name

A Sermon on Matthew 28:16-20

by

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1. Introduction

2. The Problem of Doubt (vv. 16-17).

- a. “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful” (vv. 16-17).

- i. The text starts off by telling us that the disciples go to Galilee, to the mountain Jesus had designated they meet him at.

1. The disciples come, see Jesus, and worship Him—but notice the very next line: some were doubtful.

2. The Disciples have already heard that Jesus has risen from the dead—but some of them still don’t quite buy it yet.

- ii. The word Matthew uses here to describe their doubt is the same exact word Jesus used when He rebuked Peter in Matthew 14.

1. In both of these instances, you find the disciples seeing Jesus and not believing what’s going on right before their eyes.

2. There have been all sorts of speculations by people asking why Matthew includes this detail here—but the one I find actually helpful is that this serves to show us just how wonderfully human these men really are.

- a. Jesus didn’t immediately transform them into these towering, spiritual giants; they are just rather ordinary men.

- b. They're uneducated fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and all the things that are considered the base of the talent pool in their own day.
- c. Every single last one of us starts here, because you and I didn't grasp the truth of the gospel until Christ opened our eyes fully.

3. The Prospect of Dominion (v. 18).

- a. "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (v. 18).
 - i. First, I want to draw your attention to the word "all" in these next few verses.
 - 1. "All authority has been given to Him" (v. 18).
 - 2. They are to make disciples of "all the nations" (v. 19).
 - 3. They are to teach others to observe "all that [He] has commanded [them]" (v. 20).
 - 4. And the final one at the end of verse 20: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," or literally expressed in the Greek, "I am with you all these days."
 - ii. The use of the word "all" here truly dominates the theme of verses 18-20 and ties everything together.
 - 1. The basic gist of it is this: Jesus is telling them, "I'm in complete control."
 - 2. He is the rightful Ruler over all, and based on the fact that Jesus just overcame death itself, this point is made to expunge all doubt from the minds of the disciples.
 - a. While doubt might be part of the human condition, in the end, the basis for why the church does anything at all is built upon the fact that God is the One with true authority and dominion over all things—and His plan is working out just as He intends it to.

b. In the end, this should be a wonderful comfort to the saints, because it means that there is nothing in all of creation that can stop this work of God in building His Kingdom.

b. Yet this also shows us that God is actively at work in this age to destroy all other authorities through the authority given to Jesus Christ.

4. The Prerogative of Disciples (vv. 19-20a).

a. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...” (vv. 19-20a).

i. The main command of this section is to “make disciples,” and yet we find wonderfully clear instruction on how the church is to do this.

1. There are three participles that show how we are to carry out that mission.
2. All three of these participles carry the weight of a command, so they are not separate commands, but linked to making disciples.

ii. First, we are to be “going.”

1. The implied command here that is part and parcel to making disciples is that the church is not called to be an entity that simply draws people inward, but that we are always to be looking outward.
2. Notice now the extent of this: we are to go into *all* the nations.

a. Until every nation is reached with the gospel, the church has not fulfilled the Great Commission; it truly is that simple.

b. Part and parcel to the work of the broader church is to always be expanding and working its way into places where the gospel is not found.

iii. Secondly, we are to be “baptizing.”

1. The implied result of “going” then is that people will come to genuine faith in Christ, and be baptized.
 2. The rite of baptism is an outward recognition of an inward reality that’s already taken place.
 - a. It is not implied that water baptism saves, seals, or does anything that only the saving grace of God does through the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Yet baptism also is the means by which we admit people into the fellowship of the church, where the new Christian is publicly confessing, they are now followers of Jesus Christ.
- iv. Thirdly, and finally, the last participle in making disciples is that we are to be “teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded.”
1. Notice, the issue here is not merely that the church is to teach, but it has a specific content to that teaching, and an expected result.
 - a. The content of that teaching is everything that Christ has commanded them to obey.
 - b. We must not only teach what Christ has commanded—we do so with the expectation that a person will actually obey what He has commanded.
 2. Yet more than this being the work of just a few isolated people within the church; this is the call to every believer within the church.
- b. In light of all of this, there is another reality that must be expressed, which can be exceedingly uncomfortable to admit: if any of these things are lacking, we are not making disciples of Jesus Christ.

- i. You cannot have a church that is faithful to the Great Commission, yet fails to “go, baptize, and teach.”
- ii. And the question then becomes: why do we find so many places that are doing just that?
 - 1. I believe it comes down to an even more uncomfortable reality for us to admit:
 - 2. If we, as individual Christians and collectively as a local body, are not participating in the work of making disciples, we are not yet fully-formed disciples of Jesus Christ.

5. The Promise of Dependency (v. 20b).

- a. “...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (v. 20b).
 - i. The promise we have from Christ here is clear: as we are engaged in the work of the Great Commission, we have a sure guarantee that this work is not ultimately left up to us.
 - 1. We must walk in obedience to this command to make disciples—but the power and authority in all of heaven and earth has been granted to Jesus Christ.
 - 2. It is in light of this fact that we can boldly go forth and carry out the mission of God.
 - ii. In short, it is a wonderfully simple reminder to just remain faithful and leave the results to God, because nothing can stop the work of God from being done.
 - 1. Yet it is another simple reminder that God is not absent from our midst as we carry out this work, and one glorious day this work will be completed when He returns.

2. While this is a seemingly never-ending task for the church—it does carry a completion date. We don't know precisely when that day will come, but we do know that it will.

b. Yet with this, we must consider another reality of what this promise speaks to, even though it is implicit: the “end of the age” is a very day that holds significant consequences.

6. Conclusion