

KING JESUS AND HIS CHURCH: The King Sends His Church

Matthew 28:16–20

Main Idea:

King Jesus sends ordinary disciples into the places God has providentially positioned them to make disciples—and He promises to be with them there.

THE KING SENDS HIS CHURCH

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For the past several weeks, we have been using five words to help us think about Christ's design for His church.

Christ. Shepherds. Servants. Saints. Mission.

And today, we finally arrive at that fifth word. But remember how we got here. We began with **Christ** because everything begins with Him. Before we ever ask how a church should be structured, organized, or led, we have to ask the more fundamental question: **Whose church is this?**

And the answer is Jesus. He purchased the church with His blood. He is the Head of the church. He is the Chief Shepherd of the church. He is the King of the church.

Then we saw that our King provides **shepherds**—elders who oversee the flock, guard sound doctrine, devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, and equip God's people for ministry.

After that we saw that the King provides **servants**—deacons who move toward practical needs, care for people, protect the unity of the church, and free shepherds to remain focused on their calling.

Last week we came to the **saints**. And we saw that the saints aren't spectators. The congregation isn't an audience watching a handful of people do ministry. Every believer has been called, gifted, and placed by King Jesus to participate in His work.

And now all four of those words bring us to the fifth: **Mission**.

Because eventually we have to ask: **What is all of this for?**

Why does Christ equip His church? Why does He provide shepherds? Why does He provide servants? Why does He gift and mobilize the saints? Where is all of this supposed to be going? King Jesus has already answered these questions.

Listen to Matthew 28:16–20. (Read text)

Church, **we do not have to invent a mission.** We don't have to sit around a table and decide what the church ought to be doing. We don't have to conduct a survey to discover our purpose. **Our King has already given His church its mission.**

King Jesus sends ordinary disciples into the places God has providentially positioned them to make disciples. And He promises to be with them there. And notice where Jesus begins.

Because before the King tells us what He wants us to do, **He reminds us who He is.**

I. OUR MISSION BEGINS WITH THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING

Look again at verse 18: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’” We usually call this passage the **Great Commission**. And when we think about the Great Commission, the first word that probably comes to mind is: **Go**.

“Go therefore and make disciples.” But that's not where Jesus begins. Before Jesus says “**Go**,” He says: “**All authority**.” That's important. Because the Great Commission doesn't begin with our responsibility. **It begins with Christ's authority.**

Jesus is standing before these disciples as the crucified and risen King. Death could not hold Him. The grave could not keep Him. And now He declares: “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**.” Not some authority. Not religious authority. Not authority over one little corner of the world. **All authority**. In heaven. On earth. Everywhere. Jesus is King.

And that means the mission of the church doesn't rest ultimately upon the strength of the church. **It rests upon the authority of the King.**

That's an important distinction, because churches can spend a lot of time thinking about what they don't have.

If we had more people...If we had more money...If we had more volunteers...If we had better facilities...If we had better programs...If we had more influence in the community...If we had what that church down the road has...Then imagine what we could do.

And certainly, resources matter. Buildings can be wonderful tools for ministry. Money can be faithfully stewarded for kingdom purposes. Programs can help us organize ministry. Technology can help us communicate. Training can make us more effective. Strategy can help us steward opportunities wisely. None of those things are bad. But none of those things is the source of the church's power. **They are tools for the mission. They are not the power behind the mission.**

The power behind the mission is the risen King who says: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**

And Matthew emphasizes the completeness of Christ's claim throughout this commission. Listen to the language: **All authority. Make disciples of all nations. Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.** And I am with you **always**—literally, all the days—to the end of the age.

Do you hear it? **All authority. All nations. All that Jesus commanded. All the days.** The mission is surrounded by the sufficiency of Christ. And that means our confidence cannot ultimately rest in how impressive we are. It rests in **how supreme Jesus is.**

The mission does not depend upon our impressiveness. It depends upon the supremacy of our King. That's good news.

Because there will always be something we wish we had. There will always be another resource we could use. Another person we wish would step up. Another ministry we wish were stronger. Another limitation we wish we didn't have.

But the church of Jesus Christ has never been commissioned to wait until it becomes impressive enough to obey. **Our King already reigns.** And wherever He sends us, **He already has authority there.**

When you walk across the street to talk to your neighbor—**Jesus is King there.** When you walk into your workplace tomorrow—**Jesus is King there.** When a student walks into school—**Jesus is King there.**

When God gives you an opportunity to speak about Christ to somebody who doesn't know Him—you aren't attempting to take Jesus into territory where He has no claim. **All authority in heaven and on earth already belongs to Him.**

We don't go into the world hoping Jesus might become King. **We go because Jesus is King.** And because the King has all authority, He has every right to tell His church what its mission will be.

So what exactly has He commanded us to do? Jesus makes that remarkably clear: **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”**

II. OUR MISSION IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES

What exactly has the King commanded His church to do?

Verse 19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

We hear that verse so often that sometimes we can miss just how clear Jesus is. The church doesn't have to determine its mission. **The King has already given us one.** And the central command here is not simply: **Go.**

The central command is: **Make disciples.** Going is part of it. Baptizing is part of it. Teaching is part of it. But all of those things serve the larger assignment: **Make disciples of Jesus.**

And I think that's worth slowing down long enough to understand, because churches can be incredibly busy without necessarily being focused on the mission Jesus gave us. We can fill a calendar. We can host events. We can run programs. We can have meetings. We can maintain buildings. We can provide activities for every age group imaginable. And some of those things can be wonderful tools.

But activity and mission are not necessarily the same thing. The question we have to keep asking is: **Is what we're doing helping people become disciples of Jesus?**

Because Jesus didn't say: "Go therefore and make church attenders." He didn't say: "Go therefore and make religious consumers." He didn't even say: "Go therefore and make people who agree with you."

He said: **"Make disciples."** A disciple is a follower. An apprentice. Someone who is learning the way of the Master and increasingly ordering his or her life around Him. Christian discipleship is more than knowing things **about** Jesus.

A disciple is learning to **follow Jesus**. And notice how Jesus describes that process. He says: "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." That's identification.

The gospel calls people out of the old life and into a new life with Christ and His people. Baptism publicly declares: **I belong to Jesus**. But Jesus doesn't stop there.

Verse 20: "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..."

Notice He doesn't merely say: **"Teach them everything I commanded."** He says: **"Teach them to observe everything I commanded."** There's a difference.

We aren't merely transferring information. **We're cultivating obedience**. The goal of Christian teaching isn't simply that someone knows more Bible than they knew last year.

The goal is that, through the truth of God's Word and the work of God's Spirit, we increasingly become people who **live under the rule of King Jesus**.

We learn what Jesus says about forgiveness—**and we forgive**.

We learn what Jesus says about generosity—**and we give**.

We learn what Jesus says about loving our enemies—**and we love**.

We learn what Jesus says about holiness—**and we pursue holiness**.

We learn what Jesus says about serving—**and we pick up the towel.**

We learn what Jesus says about making disciples—**and eventually we help someone else follow Jesus too.**

That's the mission. **Disciples make disciples.**

Think about what Jesus is doing on this mountain. He has spent years making disciples of these men. He called them. He taught them. He corrected them. He walked with them. He showed them how to pray. He showed them how to serve. They watched Him love people. They watched Him proclaim the kingdom. They watched Him touch lepers and welcome outsiders. They watched Him wash feet. They watched Him go to the cross. And now the risen Jesus looks at the disciples He has made and says, in effect: **“Now you go make disciples.”**

Do you see the multiplication built into the mission? Jesus makes disciples. Those disciples make disciples. Those disciples make disciples. And eventually, nearly two thousand years later, somebody told **you** about Jesus.

Somebody taught you the Scriptures. Somebody prayed for you. Somebody invited you. Somebody discipled you. Somebody faithfully carried the gospel from one generation to the next until the good news of King Jesus reached **you**. And now Jesus says: **Don't let it stop with you.**

That's mission. The gospel came **to us** on its way **through us** to somebody else. And that means evangelism and discipleship should never be separated as though they are competing ministries. We proclaim the gospel because we want people to become disciples.

We baptize new believers because disciples publicly identify with Jesus and His people. We teach the Scriptures because disciples learn to obey King Jesus. We invest in believers because growing disciples become disciple-makers themselves.

Going. Baptizing. Teaching. Obeying. Multiplying.

That's the mission the King gave His church.

And notice the scope: **“of all nations.”** Jesus intends His church to keep moving outward. Across the street. Across the county. Across cultures. Across borders. Across oceans. Until people from every tribe and tongue and nation hear the good news of the King.

But sometimes when we hear language like **“all nations,”** mission immediately starts sounding like something that happens somewhere far away. And certainly Jesus sends His church to the nations. But before most of us ever cross an ocean, there is another question worth asking: **Where has God already put us?**

Because the first mission field isn't somewhere you need to travel to. The first mission field is somewhere you're already standing.

III. OUR MISSION BEGINS WHERE GOD HAS PLACED US

So Jesus says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

And we should hear the full scope of that command. Jesus really does send His church to **the nations**. The gospel is not ours to keep.

There are people around the world who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and the church should continue sending missionaries, planting churches, crossing cultures, giving sacrificially, and going wherever Christ opens a door.

But I don't want us to hear **“all nations”** and immediately imagine that mission only happens somewhere else. Because for most of us, the first place King Jesus has called us to live on mission is the place where we already are. Paul says something fascinating in Acts 17.

He's standing in Athens, speaking to people who don't know the God of Scripture, and he tells them about the God who made the world and everything in it. And then in verses 26–27 he says that God:

“made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God...”

Paul is talking about the sovereignty of God over nations and human history. God is not merely Lord over heaven. He is Lord over **history**. He is Lord over **geography**. The rise and fall of nations does not surprise Him. The movement of peoples does not escape His providence.

God has determined the times in which people live and the boundaries of their dwelling. And I think there is an important implication there for us: **There are no accidental addresses in the providence of God.**

Now, by “address,” I don't simply mean the number printed on your mailbox. I mean the place where your life is happening **right now**. God knew the generation in which you would live. He knew the community in which you would live. He knew the people whose lives would intersect with yours.

And while we may not understand all the purposes of God's providence, we can at least begin asking a different question about the places we inhabit.

Instead of simply asking: “**Why am I here?**” Perhaps we should begin asking: “**How can I be faithful to Jesus while I am here?**” Because sometimes we spend so much of our lives waiting to get somewhere else that we miss the opportunities God has placed directly in front of us.

When I get through this season...When I get a different job...When I retire...When the kids get older...When I move...When life settles down...Then I'll have time. Then I'll serve. Then I'll invest in people. Then I'll really be useful to God. But what about here? What about now?

What about the people already around you? Don't spend this season wishing you were somewhere else so intensely that you fail to be faithful where God has you. And sometimes the place God uses isn't a place we would have chosen at all.

Joseph certainly didn't choose Egypt. Daniel didn't choose Babylon. Paul didn't choose prison. Those were not the addresses they would have selected for themselves. But here's what they discovered: **An unwanted address can still become a place of kingdom usefulness.**

And so can a temporary one. Maybe you know you're not going to be in that job forever. Be faithful there. Maybe you're only in that neighborhood for a season. Love your neighbors while you're there. Maybe you're in a season of life you never expected. Look around. Maybe circumstances have landed you somewhere you would never have chosen for yourself. Don't automatically assume that means God cannot use you there.

You don't have to understand why God has you somewhere before you can be faithful while you're there. That's liberating.

You don't have to decode the secret providence of God. You don't have to figure out some mysterious reason why every circumstance happened. You already know what Jesus has called His disciples to do.

Love people. Serve people. Bear witness to Christ. Teach others to follow Him. Make disciples. So wherever you are—**be faithful there**. And this takes us right back to what we talked about last week.

We challenged ourselves to begin asking: **“Where is God working around me, and how can I join Him there?”** But Acts 17 gives that question even more weight. Maybe we should expect to discover opportunities for God's work around us because **God knew we would be there in the first place**.

Think about the people who already inhabit your ordinary life. Your neighbors. Your coworkers. Your classmates. The other parents sitting beside you at the ballfield. The person you see every week at the same restaurant. The people you exercise with. The people you do business with. The family members God has given you. The people you regularly pass in these hallways.

We often call those things **coincidences**. Maybe we should at least be willing to ask: **“Could God use this relationship for something more?”** What if we started seeing our ordinary relationships through missionary eyes?

What if you walked into work tomorrow thinking: **“King Jesus has sent one of His disciples into this building today.”**

What if you drove into your neighborhood thinking: **“King Jesus has one of His disciples living on this street.”**

What if you walked onto the ballfield, into the classroom, into the hospital, into the restaurant, into the retirement community thinking: **“I am here as a follower of Jesus.”**

Suddenly mission isn't merely a trip you take. **Mission becomes a way you live.** And please don't misunderstand me. We absolutely want to go across oceans. We want to send missionaries. We want the gospel proclaimed among the nations.

But the disciple who is willing to travel five thousand miles to tell somebody about Jesus should also be willing to walk fifty feet across the street. The nations matter. **And your neighbor is part of the nations.**

Wherever God has placed you, live as someone Jesus has sent. You may be there for fifty years. You may be there for fifty minutes.

But while you're there—**be present. Pay attention. Love people. Look for where God is working.** And when He opens the door—**step through it.** There are no accidental addresses in the providence of God.

And wherever King Jesus sends His people, He does not send them alone. Which brings us back to the final words of Matthew's Gospel.

IV. OUR MISSION IS SUSTAINED BY THE PRESENCE OF THE KING

Jesus ends the Great Commission with one of the greatest promises in all of Scripture: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew's Gospel began with the announcement that Jesus would be called **Immanuel—God with us.** And now Matthew ends in exactly the same place: **“I am with you always.”**

The King doesn't send His church away from Himself. **The King sends His church with Himself.** That's why we can go. His authority is behind us. His mission is before us. **His presence is with us.**

But before we finish, I want you to notice one more thing.

Go back to verse 16. Who exactly was standing there when Jesus gave this mission? **Eleven disciples.**

There should have been twelve. One had betrayed Him. Peter had denied Him. Thomas doubted his power. The others had scattered. And Matthew even tells us that when they saw the risen Jesus, **some still hesitated.**

This is not Jesus handing His mission to an impressive institution at the height of its powers. It's eleven ordinary disciples. No building. No budget. No programs. No committees. No technology. No cultural influence. **But they had Jesus.** And apparently Jesus believed that was enough.

Church, what more are we waiting for? We can always name something that would make ministry easier. More people. More money. More resources. Better facilities. Another program. But **easier and necessary are not the same thing.** Strip all of those conveniences away for a moment.

What remains? **A risen King. His Word. His people. His mission. His presence.** Maybe we've spent too much time asking what else the church needs to succeed and not enough time asking what Jesus says His church needs to **obey.**

Because our King has all authority. Our King has given us our mission. Our King has providentially placed us in the field. And our King has promised to be with us.

You already have an address. You already have relationships. You already have people whose lives intersect with yours. And above all—**you already have Jesus.**

There are no accidental addresses in the providence of God. So wherever God has placed you, **live as someone Jesus has sent.** Cross the street. Open your home. Have the conversation. Open the Bible. Tell someone about Jesus. Make disciples. And remember His promise:

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

Christ. Shepherds. Servants. Saints. Mission.

Church, our King has spoken. **What are we waiting for? Go.**