

## What is the Role of the Church?

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Greetings to you, and welcome to another Sunday morning message here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. It is so good to have you with us. I always feel funny saying that "it's so good to see you" when I can't physically see you right now, but we are grateful for the opportunity to do this.

In fact, on my drive over here today, as I was coming in to record the message, I noticed it is pitch black outside. It is just like the dead of night right now. It looks surreal, otherworldly. And it's a reminder of what we do this for. We are here to tell you about another world. We do this ministry to tell you about a life to come, a better world because this world is not your home. This place is not where you belong. And so, you shouldn't get too comfortable here.

I recently I had a meeting with the elders and deacons in which we talked about all the lessons we've learned this past year in 2020. And one lesson that kept coming up from the men and their wives is that this world is so ugly right now. This world has just lost its appeal. With all the craziness and the chaos, it's not a pleasant place anymore.

And it serves to remind us that there is a reason for that: this world is not our home. This world is not where we belong. It's not a bad thing to remember. It's a good thing to remember as Christians because the Bible says that we are just strangers here. We are aliens and foreigners. We are tourists and travelers and sojourners in this life. So, we shouldn't get too used to it.

I don't know if you've traveled recently. But if you have you know that when you travel, you pack light, don't you? When you travel, you only pack a few things because you are not staying for a long time. You're just here for a moment. It's the same way for the Christian. We should travel light in this world.

Before we begin the sermon, I want to mention that some of you have asked what we plan on doing in light of the recent announcement a couple of weeks ago to extend the restrictions and lockdowns here in British Columbia. The elders have met the past couple of weeks to talk about this. And we've decided that we need to continue complying with that right now. We need to continue doing what they request because of the limited resources that we have and the principles we've been talking about in the Sunday morning series. We believe that's the best decision we can make at this time.

But the good news is, that the new order from the government does allow for us to meet in some capacity as a church. It does allow us to meet in small groups for prayer. And we want to take advantage of that. Starting this week, we are going to be organizing some weekly prayer meetings for our church for up to 10 people. That's what the order requires - no more than 10 people. The meetings will be held on Sunday afternoons at the current facility we meet at from two to four, and to sign up, you can contact the church office. Just call or email us. We are going to be sending an email out to you to let you know what you can do to get on board with that.

On one hand, you know, we can't do everything we want to right now, but on the other hand, if the world needs anything right now, it needs prayer. And if we need anything right now, as a church, we need to bring our requests to God, we need to ask for His mercy. During this time, we need to ask for His help. And so please join us in that. Please be a part of that with us. We would love to have you for this encouraging time of prayer.

And with that said this morning, we are in the middle of a series that we wouldn't be in if it were not for this year, because we're talking about the Christian and the government. That's the title of this new series we're in as a church. This year has been tough for a reason. And that's because we've been struggling with the government right now. We're not always seeing eye to eye with them.

And it's not just here but this is all over the world. Christians all over the planet are experiencing this. I don't care what your views on the corona virus are, but nobody agrees with the government on everything right now. It doesn't matter what your views on the lockdowns or the restrictions of the pandemic are, there's so much going on, nobody is completely on page. There is just too much.

In North America alone, there are 50 states in the US, and there are 13 provinces or territories in Canada. And every one of them has a different set of laws to fight the corona virus. Every one of them has a different set of rules to deal with this thing. Which means that in North America, you have 63 different ways of handling this and you can't keep up with it because it can be just too confusing. And we might add that there are different laws in each of these places for the churches. So, it's even messier on that level.

And the question we're dealing with in this series is what do you do about that? What are you supposed to do as a Christian? When you see all these different rules and all these different laws? How are we supposed to respond? Do you comply? Or do you not? Do you go along with it and submit and do what they ask or? Or do you resist? Say no, break the law and take a stand? What do you do?

We want to continue looking at that by talking about the role of the church in all this. We're looking at the third part of this series on the role of the church. Last week, if you were with us, you will know we talked about the role of the government. If you missed that, we have recorded it on our YouTube channel. We talked about the role of the state in Romans 13. And we said the role of the government to be an authority in our lives. It's the role of the government to be an earthly authority or a secular authority. Government doesn't have the heavenly authority God does, but it does have an earthly one.

We saw that in the passage that it has a job to do good to its citizens. It's supposed to help them and not harm them. It is their role to protect us and keep us safe with a sword if necessary. They are to be an avenger of wrongs, which means that the government has the right to pursue justice with violence if it has to. It has the right to pursue it with force in order to keep law and order.

But this week we are looking at the other side of that issue. Okay, if that's what the government does, what does the church do? Because obviously, the church and the state are not the same. They have different roles, because the church is not called to use violence in order to keep law and order. So, what does the church do?

To answer that, please open your Bibles with me to the Gospel of Matthew. That's what we are looking at this morning. Matthew 28 is known as the Great Commission. This is the last thing Jesus said before He left

the earth, which is important because it tells you what was on His mind as He rose to be with the Father. The Lord Jesus said a lot of wonderful things, the gospels are full of them. But this is the last one, His final words on earth.

Matthew 28:16–20.

<sup>16</sup> But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated to them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. <sup>19</sup> Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We'll stop the reading there. The Gospel of Matthew has been called the gospel of the Kingdom because that is the theme of it. Each of the four gospels had a different theme, a different emphasis. And this was Matthew's; he wrote about the Kingdom or the rule of God over the earth. This is something we have been talking about in this series. Matthew says there is a Kingdom of God and there is a kingdom of man. A Kingdom where God rules and reigns and calls the shots. And there is a kingdom where man does, to some degree, in some limited capacity.

But Matthew is writing about the most important Kingdom of all, the Lord's Kingdom. In fact, the phrase “kingdom of God” is repeated 32 times in this gospel, and the word “kingdom” is repeated 50 times, more than any other gospel, more than any other record of Jesus's life. You see it over and over again because that's what he is writing about.

For example, Matthew has three major sermons on this subject. The first one is the Sermon on the Mount. I'm sure many of you have read the Sermon on the Mount before. Our men and our Saturday morning men's study just went through it. It talks about the life of the Kingdom or the behavior of the Kingdom. One of our guys was telling us this morning, “Man, that sermon is so convicting makes me feel so bad, because I can't live up to it”. But that's the idea. The idea is that this is what the Kingdom looks like in your life. This is what it looks like fleshed out.

Blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Jesus says all that because that is what the kingdom looks like in your life; that kingdom looks gentle, merciful, and peaceful.

And then as you read on in the gospel, you come to the parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13 that describe the kingdom like the parable of the sower, or the parable of the mustard seed, or the parable of the hidden treasure, which a man found and hid again and from joy over it he went and sold all he had to buy it. It is all about the kingdom as well.

And then you come later on in the book to the Olivet Discourse. Some of you have read Jesus' Olivet discourse, which talks about the formation of the Kingdom or the establishment of it on earth. This whole gospel is about that subject. Matthew writes about that because it is his passion. And you can understand why he did that.

If you were on the earth at this time, and you witnessed a lot of what Jesus did, or just looked at Him, physically, He didn't look like a king. The way He walked and talked, and the miracles he did absolutely show that He was a king. But just looking at Him wasn't what you would have expected. He was dressed like a lowly person. In fact, He died like a lowly person. He was crucified, very unkingly thing to do. So, Matthew writes this gospel to remind you that He is one. Jesus, is a King. He is Lord of all.

And with that in mind, he starts off this passage this way in verse 18. After telling us all this stuff in Matthew 28, the Lord says, and Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to me, in heaven and on earth." And that is quite a way to begin a Great Commission. That is quite a way to begin anything. That is a loaded statement. It is one thing to have some authority but it's another thing to have ALL authority, isn't it?

It takes it to another level. I mean, there is nothing that doesn't fit between heaven and earth. This means that Jesus is Lord overall; He is King overall. He rules overall. Jesus puts this in the grandest terms. "This is all mine", Jesus says, and what does He do with it? If you look in verse 19, He says, "Go therefore, and make disciples of the nations".

We are going to walk through what He says here. This is what Jesus does with His authority. This is what He does with His power; He tells you to make disciples. He tells you to make followers of Him. Why? Well, because He is the King. Why do you need to do that? Because He is Lord. He is the Saviour of the universe, and people need to know it. People need to see it. They need to believe. And it is your job to tell them. That is what you are put on this earth to do. As a Christian, it is your job to tell people they need to follow the King.

That is the reason the world is so messed up right now, isn't it? That is the reason the world is so chaotic and crazy and evil. Because people aren't following the King. Because people aren't submitting to their Lord. Instead, they want to do whatever they want to do. They want to live however they want with no consequences, no repercussions to that.

But one day, there are going to be consequences. One day, there are going to be repercussions because they are going to have to answer to this Man. They are going to have to answer to Jesus Christ. And we need to tell them about that now.

What is the job of the church? If you want to boil it into a nutshell, this is it: we make disciples. We tell people about the King. And I mention this because I'm afraid so many people don't get this today. They are so caught up in other things. They are so distracted in other stuff, they seem to want to talk about anything else, everything else, but Jesus Christ.

If you took a random sample of the churches here in Chilliwack, you could find anything around here. I mean, they feed the homeless, they help the poor. Some of them have rock shows on Sundays, they jazz it up. Other ones have their ceremonies, rituals, and traditions Sunday in, Sunday out. Week in and week out. But they don't say much about Jesus. Or if they do, it is not specific. It's just very general, very vague. Their mind is on other things.

Some even go beyond that, and they get into politics. Some churches today are trying to tell the government what to do. They are trying to tell it how to handle its business. It's almost like they don't see a separation between church and state; they think the church should take the state over and boss it around. This isn't

such an issue here in Chilliwack probably as it is in the States, because it's been kind of a hot year in the states for politics. They just had an election there. They just brought on a new president.

You know, it's my country I come from, but it surprised me to watch that and see how the Christians responded to it. See how believers handled it. How pastors and Christian leaders got so emotionally wrapped up in that with the attitude that if we just put the right man in office it is going to solve all our problems. If we just get the right man elected president, it will make America a Christian nation. It will be a Christian society. And friends, it won't. It doesn't work that way.

It may make it look more Christian, but it won't make it *be* Christian. It may make it look godly or holier than the alternative. But it won't make it that way. Because Jesus is the only thing that can do that. Jesus can make a man godly, nothing else can do it. So, we have to tell people about Him.

You know, as I was watching this election unfold on the news, one Christian leader I came across was complaining about the fact he was being censored on Twitter. He was complaining that he was getting kicked off for some political comments that he made. And while I believe in free speech as much as the next guy, I had to wonder, why are you doing that in the first place? As a pastor of a church, why are you saying so much about politics? You need to be telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's forget about a president for now; let's talk about the Lord. Let's forget about these little kingdoms and these petty things, and let's talk about something that's so much greater than that. So much bigger than that. So much more powerful than that! That's what we're supposed to be telling people. That's our job.

Listen, friends, at the end of the day. We are not trying to make people Republican. We are not trying to make them conservative. We're not trying to make them GOP or part of the opposition movement of Canada. We are trying to make them Christian; we're trying to get them saved. That's what the church does. That is our job. Everything else is secondary to that. Everything else is peripheral.

There's a saying in some circles, that you can't legislate morality. You can't make people moral by passing a law, because the problem goes deeper than that. And it's the same way here with making disciples. You can't make disciples by passing laws. You can't make someone a Christian by giving them a bunch of rules, you have to do so much more.

And that is what we're going to talk about this morning. In Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20, we're going to look at two things that God has called the church to do. That is our outline for today. And they both revolve around this idea of making disciples. They both revolve around the idea of teaching people to follow Jesus Christ.

You know, if you were doing what Jesus did here, if you were starting the church, what would you do? Where would you begin? This is His movement. If we were honest about it, most of us would start with politics, wouldn't we? We would start with winning over our political leaders, putting new ones in office, getting the right guy elected, and christianizing the nation, right? We would moralize the country with a bunch of laws. We would give them rules. Do this; don't do that. Wear this; don't wear that. Eat this; don't eat that. We might even raise up an army to enforce it and make people keep it.

On the contrary, I want you to notice what Jesus does here. This is how He starts the church: He dies on a cross, He rises from the grave, and then He sends us out to talk to people. That's it. That's what He does.

Offers Himself for the sins of many. Shows that He defeated death and the grave. And then commissions us to spread the word because the kingdom of God does not operate like the kingdom of man.

This is a perfect example of how the Kingdom of God is different than our kingdoms. This is what Jesus does to start the church. And we are going to talk about that by looking at two things God has called the church to do.

The first one is to *go*...very simple. If you are looking for something simple, I've got it for you today. The first thing God has called the church to do, in order to make disciples, is to go, which means that God has called the church to take the initiative in this and go tell people about Jesus.

We can't sit still and do this. You can't be apathetic and stay where you are in your comfort zone. The first thing He tells you is you have to get out and go. And if you look in verse 16, He says it this way: "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, all authority has been given to me, in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations."

You know, as I told you before, this is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. It's known as the Great Commission. These are the last words Jesus said on the earth. In North America, a lot of our towns have city commissioners who speak on behalf of the City. And in a similar way, in His last message on earth, Jesus gave His disciples the authority to do that. That is what He's doing here. He is given them the authority to speak on His behalf, to go make disciples in His name.

And He does this at an interesting time. Because at this point, in the Gospel of Matthew, there is a lot that has happened. Matter of fact, everything has already happened in this gospel, this is the end of it. So, these men have had a busy time. They have seen Jesus minister in Israel, do miracles, preach sermons, make certain people mad, get crucified, be resurrected, and now this is 40 days after that.

This has been 40 days since the resurrection, these men have had an exciting time. It's been kind of bewildering. They've seen their own Lord come back alive from the dead after they all fled and ran from Him. And you have got to be wondering at this point in the Gospel, what's next? If you are one of these disciples, you have got to be wondering, after all you just saw, what's He going to do now? What can Jesus possibly say to top all that?

And this is what He says in verse 18: Jesus came and spoke to them saying, all authority has been given to me, in heaven and on earth. In other words, Jesus says, I've risen from the grave. I've defeated death and evil and sin, you guys know that. You have already witnessed that. Here is the logical conclusion to that, Jesus says. This means I'm God, and I have all authority on heaven and earth. The only person that can have all authority on heaven and earth is God, right? The only person who could have something like this would be the Lord of the Universe, Jesus says, that is Who I am.

The disciples understood this because verse 17 says that when they saw Him, they worshipped Him. That's quite a way to end the Gospel of Matthew. When they saw him, they knew who He was. And so they bowed down and worshiped Him, but some were doubtful. That could mean a couple of things. But one interpretation is that it could mean that they were doubtful that it was actually Jesus standing on the mountain. They weren't sure; they were a long way off. But the ones who recognized Him and the ones who knew it was Him from such a distance, gave Him all glory as God. They worshipped Him.



And Jesus says, with this authority that I have, as God, I'm telling you, go make disciples. The word "disciple" here in Greek means "the learner" or "someone who is learning". Every Rabbi back then had his disciples. And what it meant was that they were his students. They would follow him around, listen to his lessons. They would follow him physically, because you had to follow someone to listen to him back then. There was no radio, there was no television, no internet. If you wanted to learn from that preacher, you had to literally go where he went.

But they also followed him spiritually. They also followed his teachings and what he said, and Jesus says, that is what you are going to make: disciples. The church makes learners of Jesus Christ, it makes pupils of His. The word "disciples" is placed in an important position here in the sentence. Because in the original language, there is really only one command in verse 18. There is only one order, and it's "make disciples". Everything else just modifies that. Everything else just kind of builds on it.

You could translate verse 19 this way: make disciples of all the nations going, baptizing them in the name of the Father, teaching them to observe all that I command you. And lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age.

In other words, the point is to make disciples. Everything else just sort of adds color to that and it begins with the word "Go". You can't make disciples if you don't go where the people are. If these guys stayed on a mountain in Galilee, it wouldn't have done any good, they had to come down and go.

The word "go" in Greek could be translated to "having gone". And the idea is that having gone about your business, having gone about your daily life, whatever the life may be, wherever it may lead you, you need to make disciples as you go. Needs to be part of your daily routine. Doesn't mean you have to leave Israel, because some of these men did that, some of them didn't. Doesn't mean you have to change your job or your location. Again, some of Jesus early followers did all of that, some didn't. Some of them stayed in town here in Jerusalem, carried on the mission there.

But the point is, wherever you go, whatever you do, you need to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the mission of the church. That's what we do as followers of Christ. The church only has so many resources, it only has so much time. So, we can't get to every need on the planet, even though that would be wonderful. We have to prioritize some things. Jesus says, this is what we prioritize. We tell people about Jesus Christ.

It's really not that complicated. If you work at a desk job, you go to people at desk jobs. You make disciples at your desk, you do double duty, you pull two strings. If you are a stay-at-home-mom, you go to other stay-at-home moms. You serve your family, change the diapers, rock the baby to sleep at three o'clock in the morning, and then you go to others who do the same. Talk to them at school, talk to them at preschool, talk to them on the playground. If you're in college, you go to those in college. If you are in high school, you go to those in high school, if you work on a farm, go to those on the farm, but whatever you are, whatever you do, you go.

This is very important friends. You don't go talk about politics. That is not what this is about. You don't go talk to them about world events, or the corona virus or the pandemic or the lockdowns because they hear enough about that already on the news, you need to tell them something different. You don't need to repeat the things they're already hearing from the world.

By the way, you can talk to them about politics, and you can talk to them about world events. There's a place for that, there's a place for small talk in life and that sort of thing. But your conversation doesn't need to stop with that; you need to go deeper. Because those things will do nothing for their soul. It will do nothing for their heart. It can't keep you from hell. Jesus is the only one who can do that. So, you need to tell the world about Him.

To say it another way, the church is part of a spiritual kingdom. And so, we need to have spiritual conversations with people. The church is part of a deeper kingdom, a more significant kingdom. And so, we need to have more significant conversations with people. It doesn't need to all be about the physical stuff. Not with us. We have to go past the things on the surface.

It's interesting if you survey the Bible, Matthew 28 is not the only time Jesus gave the Great Commission. They were repeated in other places. For instance, turn over to Acts chapter one with me. Apparently, this was important enough to repeat in the Bible. You see that with a lot of things from Jesus in the four Gospels. Matthew would say it one way, Luke would say in another. Mark would say it this way, John would say it that way. We will hear these words from Jesus mentioned another way in the book of Acts.

Right before He left the earth, the disciples asked Jesus in Acts 1:6, "Lord, is it at this time, you're restoring the kingdom of Israel?" In other words, is the kingdom coming now? Is the physical Kingdom going to be here now? The political king that you promised us in the Old Testament where the Jews are going to rule the earth? And that is an interesting question. It is very insightful, because it shows you what was on the disciple's mind at this point; shows you what was on their heart. Because they understood the significance of this, they got what happened, the Messiah has come, the Savior is here! It is Jesus, He's a Savior!

So, they asked Him a logical question, "Jesus, is this it? Is the kingdom of God coming down to earth?" Now look at what He says. In verse 7 it says, "it's not for you to know periods of time, or appointed times which the Father has set by His own authority". In other words, no, this is not that kingdom. And that's interesting what He says here, because He doesn't correct their misunderstanding. He says, you guys have it right, I am going to bring that kingdom, but not now. You are going to have to wait for that. There's a point of time for that. It will be here when it will be here, but not right now.

But what He says in verse 8 is, "but you will receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." You can read that and tell that is another way of saying what we just read in Matthew. That is the Great Commission said another way.

What Jesus is saying here is: I'm not building a physical Kingdom now. I'm not building a political one, now is not the time to get into politics, or take over politics. There are times or that; that's not now. Now I'm building a spiritual one. And it is your job, guys, to go tell people about that. It is your job to go and be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and even to the remotest parts of the earth, which is exactly what the disciples did.

If you study their history, this is exactly what these men did. None of them ran for office in Israel. And none of them got into politics. Jesus was popular with a lot of people. There were times when He had big crowds following Him. These guys could have capitalized on that, maybe work their way up somewhere. They didn't do that. They didn't try to join the Sanhedrin, or buddy up to the scribes and Pharisees. They didn't try to



take over the temple, take over the synagogues, to gain power and approval. Instead, they just went out and told people the gospel. They told them the good news about Jesus.

Listen, I'm not saying there's not a time for these other things. I'm not saying there's not a time for a Christian to go into politics, because there is. There most certainly is. In fact, we need more Christians doing that right now. We need more godly men and women to go into positions of authority in our country so they can make changes. They can help influence people to do the right thing before God. We should pray for that; we should support that in any way we can. But what I'm saying is, that's not the job of the church. That is not the job of Christianity as a whole.

God has called us to greater things. Charles Spurgeon said, "If God has called you to preach, you should not stoop to become a king". We got a lot of Christians today that are stooping. We got a lot of churches today that are bowing down to things they just should not bow down to. We have a higher calling. We need to answer it.

On his commentary on Acts, W. A. Criswell tells a story in the time an anonymous woman gave a Bible tract to Richard Baxter. She gave a little gospel tract to him and he was instantly converted. He became a Christian on the spot. And he went on to write a book called "The Call of the Unconverted", which was used to save a man named Philip Doddridge. He came to the Lord because of that, and Doddridge went on to write a book called "The Rise and Progress of Religion", which was used to lead William Wilberforce to the Lord, who wrote a book called "A Practical View of Christianity", which was used to lead a man named Lee Richmond to the Lord, who wrote a track called "The Dairy Man's Daughter", which was used to save hundreds.

But it all started with one person. All the links in that chain of people coming to the Lord started with one anonymous woman whom we don't even know. She took it upon herself to go tell someone about Jesus. I'm guessing it wasn't easy for her. She was probably nervous and scared that she might say something wrong or embarrass herself. But she did it anyway because that is what God called her to do. And look at how He blessed it.

Friends, this is how discipleship works. It works with one person telling another person who tells another who tells another. One person sharing with one person who shares with another who shares with another, on down the list. It all starts with this: you have to go. You have to go tell them.

That leads to another point to consider this morning, as it relates to making disciples. First thing God has called the church to do is to *go*, which means God has called us to take the initiative in this. He's called us to take the lead. You can't stay still and make disciples; you can't stay in your comfort zone...you have to get out of that. This is where it begins.

We are so passive today as Christians, aren't we? We are so mousy and afraid. What are we afraid of? Our God has all the authority in heaven and earth! What are we nervous about? We need to be bold in this and that brings us to another point to consider, and that is to *teach*. The second thing God has called the church to do as it pertains to making disciples is to teach. Not only do we go *tell* people about Jesus, but we need to elaborate on that.

Not only do we say a few things about Him, but we need to say a lot. We need to go into detail. We are guilty of falling so short because we don't say enough. And if you read on in the passage, it says "And Jesus came

up and spoke to them saying, All authority has been given to me, in heaven and on earth. 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 command you.

As the passage goes on here, Jesus begins to elaborate on his original command to make disciples. That's the main idea, but everything else flows out of that. And now as he continues, He tells us a couple of things here. For one, He tells us to baptize people in His name. The word in Greek is baptizo. Which means to immerse or dip something in water. In some cases, it can mean to submerge, or drown it, dunk it. And the idea is you put them under the water, you don't keep them over it, you actually put them under it. When someone is baptized, that's the idea.

When Jesus was on the earth, He gave us two ordinances to follow, two outward signs to represent our salvation. The first one is the Lord's Supper, which symbolizes our salvation with bread and wine because as we take in the bread, we symbolize His body. As we drink the juice of the wine, we symbolize His blood. And the other is baptism, which does it with water, symbolizes it with immersion. The idea is as you go down into the water, you show your death to the old life. And as you come up, you show your birth to the new life in Christ. It's kind of a symbol of the resurrection. It's a symbol of coming out of the grave.

And the point here is, this is what we do with people when they become Christians. This is how we treat them; we need to baptize them. So the whole world will know what has happened to them. Every time we have a baptism service at Grace, our people get so excited. It is the only time of the year I hear them applaud and cheer. But they do that because what it symbolizes is the same thing that happened to them: new life in Christ! We have to do that when we make disciples.

And then He says we are to teach them. We are to instruct them in verse 20. I just told you that the word disciple means learner in Greek. So, in order to make learners, this is what you have to do, you have to teach them. You have to guide them in the things of the faith, because when they first get saved, they don't know it. It's all new to them. Or if they are lost, they have no idea. And so, it is your job to bring them along.

This means that the church is not in the entertainment business. Or even in the encouragement business, as important as that may be. We are in the teaching business. Verse 20, says we need to "teach them to observe all that I command", and the word "all" there means just what it says. It means we need to teach people everything. We can't leave anything out, you can't skimp on the details because this passage is offensive, or that one's not as interesting.

And to add to that, the word "teaching" here, is in the continuous tense in Greek, which means this should be a continuous thing for us. It should be an ongoing thing. We should do it over and over and over again. Teach them over and over again. Why? Because there is always more to say. Why do we do that? Because when you are talking about Jesus, you are never done. You can never tell them enough.

Someone (a lost relative) asked me one time, "when you teach the Bible, do you ever run out of material?" And I said, "Never". Never. Because you are talking about God, and that is an infinite subject. You are talking about the Lord Jesus, and it's inexhaustible, there's no bottom to the well. There's no top to the mountain. Climb it for 100 years, you are not to the top yet. Heard one pastor say when you preach, you feel like you got a bucket and you're standing at the ocean. And all you can fill up is this little bucket.

No matter how far you go with Jesus, you can always go farther still. You know, this is interesting, because if you think about it, Jesus, He only ministered for three and a half years in Israel. Scholars say when you put the timeline together, and all the pieces fit and all that, that's what it comes to. He ministered for three and a half years, 1260 days all together was His ministry.

Jesus is born in the first couple of chapters, and Matthew talked about His birth. And you don't really hear anything from His birth until the time His ministry begins in the book of Matthew. And then when His ministry begins, three and a half years, not a lot of time. I mean, humanly speaking, that's a pretty short space. But what He did during that time was so amazing, so special and incredible, that we're going to be talking about it forever. You are going to be talking about these years in history for all eternity, trying to wrap your mind around it.

And can I just say that one reason why Christians say so little about Jesus today is because we don't get this. One reason we are so distracted with other things and got our mind on so many other things is because we don't believe this anymore. We don't have a deep view of Jesus like this. We don't have a high view of Him. We think we have said enough already.

We think we have told people enough because we've given them the gospel one time. We've given them a tract. We have taken them down the Romans road of salvation. We have done these things, and therefore we're done. Our job is finished. Jesus says it is not. Your job is never finished. It is never done until you tell them "all that I commanded".

And friends, you don't even understand "all that I commanded". So, you can never finish telling them. You are going to be doing this all your life. You are going to be doing this until the day you die. I pray on your deathbed, you will be making disciples, telling people about Jesus because you won't be done then.

This word "all" here means every word, every syllable. every verse, every chapter, every parable, every miracle, every lesson, every square inch of the Bible. You need to tell them that and then when you do that, you need to go over it again to make sure you didn't miss anything. And then when you do that, you need to go over it again to make sure you didn't miss anything. It's never over. Never done. This is why we practice expository preaching here at Grace Fellowship Church. This is why we go through the Bible one verse at a time, to make sure we don't miss anything.

We have been going through the book of Ephesians together on Sunday mornings, and we have been in it about a year and a half. We're not done yet. It is also why we do other things like our Attributes of God class and the men's and women's Bible study. It's why we have different resources online. We have our Vision Statement online, we have our Distinctives up there. It is why we have a children's ministry, why we have an outreach ministry. If we miss something in one place, we can cover it in another.

That is what this passage says. This is what our Lord tells us to do. To say it another way, friends, if we did this, if we did what Jesus is telling us to do here, we really wouldn't have time for anything else. If we did what this Great Commission is calling us to do as a church, we wouldn't have time for distractions. We would be too busy. Because we would understand there's bigger fish to fry. There's more important things to talk about than politics and world events.

This passage is so fascinating to me because of the context of it. Because of all that has happened so far in the Gospel of Matthew, all the history of Jesus. And for Him to say this at the end is fascinating. But not only

that, no one knew more about Jesus than these guys on this mountain. No one knew more about Him and what He said and what He did.

These 11 guys, they had heard every parable, every story, every sermon. And when they went on and did their ministry, they did not get distracted with other things. Because they knew this is more important. They didn't get sidetracked by other stuff in the world. Because they knew how important what Jesus said was.

There's another lesson in here for us, and that is the closer you are to Jesus, the more you should have to say about Him. The tighter you are with Him, the more you should tell people, because you have seen more. You have heard more, and you have witnessed more.

These guys were a wonderful example of that. They were Jesus's closest followers, His closest friends on earth. And after He left, all they could talk about was Him. After He ascended into heaven, and you study the lives of these men, all they could teach on was His name. They didn't want to talk about anything else.

I'm afraid the reason we don't talk about Him enough today is because some of us can't relate to this. The reason we are so quiet about Jesus is because some of us don't know what this is like; we're not close to Him anymore. We are not tight with Him; our love for Him has grown cold. We have heard the call of other lovers and we have gone off and left Him far behind. And therefore, when someone says, "Hey, I hear you are a Christian, do you go to church? What does your church teach?" you don't even know what to say, because it's been a long time since you spend time with Jesus.

It shouldn't be that way for us. Jesus had some strong words to say about those who let their love for Him grow cold. In the book of Revelation, when He's writing to the church at Ephesus, He said this:

"I know your deeds and your labor and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men. And you have perseverance and have endured on account of my name and have not become weary, but I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

That phrase "left your first love" means they walked away from it. They got distracted. They had a good handle on doctrine. You study this church in Revelation, and they had a good handle on theology because they could not tolerate evil men. But in the end, it didn't matter because they left Jesus behind.

At first, He was everything to them. Jesus was their whole world, He was all they thought about, all they wanted to talk about. Everything was Jesus this and Jesus that. Couldn't wait to tell their neighbor, couldn't wait to tell their friends or their relatives. Now all that has changed.

The way this is worded is so sad to this church. so tragic because Jesus doesn't say they left their first doctrine. He says they left their first love. He doesn't say they left their first theology behind (and this is the church that has the mile-long doctrinal statement). This is a church you walk into their library, and every book you would ever want to read is on the shelf. I mean, these people have their t's crossed, their i's dotted, everything is right where it's supposed to be. But they got it all wrong. Their heart had checked out on Him.

This should be a warning to us, because if it could happen to them, it could happen to us. If it could happen to a church right during the time Jesus lived, or right after the time Jesus lived, we could do it today. They left Jesus behind within a century; within several decades. It could happen to us today.

Leads me to ask you the question, friends, is this happening to you today? Have you left your first love behind? I'm not asking this to the church in Ephesus, I'm asking this to you. I'm asking this to the church today. Do you find yourself being pulled away from Jesus Christ? You find your affections for Him growing cold because you are thinking about other things?

Like we said earlier, this year has been nuts. But in the midst of all that, do you find yourself losing the passion you once had for Him? They say that the same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay. Has this last year hardened you or softened you when it comes to Jesus Christ?

In fact, let me put it this way, make it even more personal. When is the last time you told someone about Jesus? When is the last time you brought Him up in a conversation? When is the last time His name rolled off your tongue? His name just poured out of your heart. And yet when is the last time you talked to someone about politics? When is the last time you talked to someone about Donald Trump or Justin Trudeau or the corona virus?

We shouldn't act that way as Christians. We shouldn't think that way. We need to tell people about Jesus Christ. D. L. Moody once said, "God will not accept a divided heart. He must be an absolute Monarch or He won't have anything to do with you at all. Because there's not enough room in your heart for two thrones. There is not enough room in your heart for two Lords. Jesus must be Lord of all, or he is not Lord at all." And he is right.

So, which one is it going to be for you today? Is He going to be Lord of all? Or is He going to be nothing to you? In my studies this week, I came across a story that Donald Gray Barnhouse used to tell about an American soldier who was captured in Latin America during a revolution. So, they were going to execute him. They were going to kill him before a firing squad. And as they marched him off to do that one of his fellow soldiers did something strange because he draped an American flag across his shoulders. And he said to the opposing army, "If you shoot this man, you have to shoot our flag, and incur the wrath of a nation". And as the story goes, they didn't shoot. They let them go.

And Donald Gray Barnhouse went on to say that in a similar way, if you believe in Jesus, this is what He does. He wraps Himself around you. He covers you with His love, and nothing can touch you without incurring the wrath of God. Nothing can touch you without going through Him first. And that is what we need to tell people. That is what we need to tell the world. The world needs a Savior; they need someone to wrap Himself around them. And we can offer that to them in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Will you do that today? Will you make disciples as your Lord has called you to do? Let me close us in a word of prayer.

Father, as we read this passage, we are all challenged this morning. I don't think there's anybody in our church, or especially me, who's not guilty of not saying enough about our wonderful Savior. Lord, would this be a call to action with this burning in our hearts, to tell people about the One who has saved us in such a magnificent way.

Lord, help us as we navigate these difficult times as a church. We want to be a good witness during these days, we want to be a good testimony for Christ. And yet there are so many things coming at us. There are so many different ideas about what the church is supposed to do, this or that, how Christians are supposed to behave. But would you always drive our minds back to this text?

What do we do? We do what our Lord has called us to do. We do what Jesus has told us to do. Would this church, Father, would Grace Fellowship Church, be one that is known as lovers of Christ. Not just sound in doctrine, not just sound in theology, but lovers of our Lord.

Thank you for what You have shown us here, Father. Would we go out and apply it to our lives today? We pray this in Jesus name, for His glory. Amen.

May the Lord bless you and have a wonderful day!