

## The Life Giving Mission

**[Proposition: Jesus empowers disciples to make disciples through his power and presence, therefore we can obey the Great Commission without fear.]**

What are some of your favorite endings to stories: whether books, tv shows, or movies? Thursday at dinner I asked my family that question. Harry Potter was put forward as a good ending. So was the Back II the Future trilogy. Little Women received mixed reviews. Opinions were more uniform on endings they really disliked. Of course this will all come down to personal opinion, but two things that seem to make for a good ending are: 1) tying together elements from earlier in the story, and 2) a conclusion that points to and invites us to think about the future.

In our passage today, we have the end of Matthew's telling of the story of Jesus's earthly life and ministry—and he masterfully does the two things mentioned above. This paragraph is dense with connections to earlier moments in Jesus's ministry—it ties together separate threads, and it also adds the final lesson for disciples of Jesus that will propel them into the future. In this encounter, **Jesus promises to sustain his disciples through his power and presence as we make disciples. Jesus promises to be all that we need him to be as we join him on his mission.**

### I. Jesus calls us to make disciples.

Look at v. 19-20

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

A disciple is a follower, a learner, a pupil. Someone who adheres to and lives out the principles of their master. Both principles and practices, way of looking at the world, and way of living in the world. Here we are witnessing the capstone class for the disciples, what is the final lesson: disciples make other disciples. Here the apprentices take up the work they have been training for. And Jesus gives us his vision for how discipleship happens. He says we are to make disciples by going, baptizing them in the threefold name, and teaching them to obey.

### A. Go!

Going is the necessary precondition of making disciples and that makes it part of the command to make disciples. If the eleven there on the mountain in Galilee didn't "go," they could not make disciples of "all nations." If they hadn't gone, you and I would never have come to know Christ and be his disciples. Disciples are sent people.

In our day there remain plenty of opportunities to "go" or support those who go: short term mission trips (we have one to Nicaragua coming up), supporting missionaries, going to the mission field.

*But “going” is as much a way of looking at the world as it is a location in the world.* People from many nations are to be found right in our own schools and neighborhoods, and as the west becomes more secular places that were historically considered Christian like America and Western Europe are now increasingly part of “the nations” that are unreached.

One author said it this way:

**Go ye into all the world, and don’t start at the farthest point. The nearest point will do.<sup>1</sup>**

The disciples were sent to that nations, but that didn’t mean their people or families were excluded. Even as you consider world missions and your part in it, you can “Go make disciples” to in your life right now: your children, co-workers, friends.

As we go, we are to

### **B. Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

We all follow someone or something as our source of joy, contentment, and rest—even if there is no religion or philosophy we would point to. Apart from Christ, deep down we are all following our own selfish and self-centered desires. We believe we are our own masters.

But becoming a disciple of Jesus means a change of allegiance. It means forsaking self and other masters to follow Christ, it means conversion. We make disciples through evangelism—we tell people the good news of Jesus’s death for sins and his glorious resurrection. That he is the true King and is making all things new. Just as Jesus called his first disciples: Simon, Andrew, James, and John off their boats to become fishers of men in Matthew 4, so we are called and sent out to call others to become followers of Jesus.

When an unbelieving person responds to that message and puts their trust in Christ, they are brought into relationship with, and into the very life of God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Because of the work of Christ, in baptism the Spirit descends on us and the Father speaks “this is my beloved” over us as he did over Christ in Matthew 3. In that passage we saw the three persons of the Trinity, and now we baptize (as v. 19 says) in the one name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is three-in-one, one-in-three.

If you have trusted Christ and become his disciple, you need to be baptized as a sign and seal of your entrance into fellowship and life with God. We would love to help you take that step, or answer any questions you have. Call the office, fill out the Response Card, talk with me after the service.

We also make disciples by

### **C. Teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded**

Discipleship begins by trusting in Christ and being baptized, and it continues in a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. Matthew’s Gospel is a handbook of discipleship. If you want to know how a disciple of Jesus lives, simply read Matthew.

What you will find is that Jesus wants his disciples not just to fix their external behavior, but to depend on him through the Spirit to have the “deeper righteousness” of the heart. As Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin Miller, *The Vanishing Evangelical*, p. 72.

unpacks it in Matthew 5, the essence of that heart righteousness is sacrificial love: Love your enemies. Or as Jesus says in Matthew 16: you will only find true life, by taking up your cross and following him.

Notice also that we are to teach everything *Jesus* commanded (v. 20). That is why we rely on Scripture in our preaching—disciples want to know what Jesus says, not what is trendy, or entertaining. We are called to learn what Jesus said about God, the Bible, the Gospel, and how to live as citizens of his kingdom.

There are a lot of ways that this plays itself out in our church—but I want to highlight particularly a few ways we do discipleship here at CCC. As you here these, hear them as opportunities for you to join in the work of making disciples.

**One on one discipleship/Very different life  
Groups/Mens/Womens  
Mentoring College students**

If you are a disciple of Jesus who isn't making disciples of Jesus, you haven't yet learned and put into practice this final cumulative lesson from Jesus—disciples makes disciples. And the best way to learn is to teach.

Illustration:

My first year of college I was a business major, and I had to take Calculus for Business. I hadn't taken Calculus in HS, and I was not the most attentive student in class, and I rarely did my homework. As you might imagine I wasn't learning or doing well in the class. But after the first few tests, I found out a friend who lived in my dorm was in the same class, and she was doing even worse than I was. So I started tutoring her, we did homework together, and reviewed quizzes and tests. I learned way more in those times helping her than I did from the instruction. Disciple making is like that, you begin to understand the Jesus's teaching and way of life in a much deeper way as you disciple others.

**Jesus calls us to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching.**

But

**II. Jesus calls us to make disciples by relying on his power and presence.**

***A. Jesus calls us to make disciples by relying on his power***

You can see this in verse 18-19:

*18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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,*

The justification, the ground of the commission to go and make disciples is v. 18 that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus has the authority to send us to the nations because he has authority over us his followers, but more than that over all things. He is not only Son of

David the long awaited King of Israel as Matthew introduced him in chapter 1. Jesus has told us 28 times in Matthew that he is the Son of Man. That title comes from the prophet Daniel and a vision he saw in 7:13-14

*13 "I saw in the night visions,*

*and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.*

***14 And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;***

*his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.*

The kingdom has begun just as Jesus preached (4:17), and he now rules over all the nations. In the wilderness the devil had offered him all the kingdoms of the earth if he would bow down (Matthew 4), but Jesus became Lord of All by suffering for us on the cross and being raised again.

Now in this "all authority," he calls us to make disciples.

But there is more to it than that. If we take to heart that he has all authority in heaven and on earth, it encourages and empowers us. We make disciples relying on his power: he is the one who softens heart and grants faith, he is the one who answers prayer and provides, he is reclaiming his world and nothing can stop him – death and the devil are already defeated. Matthew hammers home in the first 5 chapters that Jesus has fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament, and now we see that he also fulfilled his word that he would give his life as a ransom for many, and that on the third day be raised again.

As we go baptize and teach, we can have real confidence that the gates of hell will not prevail—because Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth.

Illustration:

I heard a pastor tell a story once about his son's little league team. I may not get every detail correct, but it was something like this. In their league every player on the team got to bat when their team was up, regardless of the score or the number of outs. The pastor's son got the chance to pitch in the bottom of the last inning, and his team was winning by more than the number of hitters the other team had left. But the boy was very nervous, because he couldn't make the connection. He was worried the other team would score. So his dad kept trying to explain it to him. We are winning by 10. How many batters do they have? 9. So it doesn't matter if every single one of these guys hits a homerun, you literally can't lose. You don't

have to be perfect, you just have to throw the ball. Making disciples is something like that—Jesus has all authority, just throw the ball.

There's a story in the Acts where the Lord gives Paul a vision while in Corinth. In it he tells Paul to keep speaking because there are many in the city who are his people. Imagine what kind of confidence that gave Paul as he made disciples.

Here's what the Great Commission tells us. What Jesus said to Paul is true in every place in the world, every school and city, neighborhood and nation Jesus has many who are his people. He has all authority in heaven and earth.

He doesn't send us out alone, but promises to be with us

### **B. Jesus calls us to make disciples and promises his presence.**

The second half of Verse 20 says:

*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Jesus promises to be with his disciples wherever they are, whenever they are.

One of the first things we learn about Jesus in Matthew's Gospel is that he is "Emmanuel" – God with us. God's presence with his people is one of the through lines of Scripture: In creation people were in God's presence in the garden, but because of sin humans were excluded from that presence. Abraham is called by God who promises to be with him and his offspring. God rescues his people out of Egypt so that can come to the mountain and worship him. The tabernacle, the sacrifices, the Temple all of this is about the presence of God being with his people. God wants to be with his people. Jesus is born, Immanuel, God with us.

In all these ways God has been present in a special way—and in a very specific place and with specific people. But now, because Jesus has been crucified and raised up a new age has begun. He will pour out his Spirit and be present not just in one place and with specific people, but in every disciple, in every nation they to which they go, and unto the end of time as we know it.

When you become a follower of Jesus—you receive the presence of Christ. He goes with you wherever you go. If I can say it this way, **He has become even-more-emmanuel, and every-where-emmanuel.** Everywhere he reigns he is present, and everywhere he is present he reigns.

### **Conclusion:**

We began in the illustration talking about what makes a good ending of story. Let me ask you, what story are you living in? The kingdom of the world tells us all authority is given to those who have money and power—so we make disciples for our businesses, our causes, our favorite politicians.

But the Truth is Christ has all authority, he gives himself to all who would trust and follow him. And he calls us to become disciples who make disciples, to share with others and know for ourselves his power and presence.

