

A Message From Heaven – Part 2

Matthew 28:16-20

I. Introduction: Famous Last Words

1. In preparing for this teaching, I decided to take a few minutes and look at famous last words. **We have long known the outsized influence one's final words can have on their legacy.**

A. Some of you might be wondering why this exercise. **Since our first teaching on October 20, 2023, Matthew has brought us on an incredible journey of coming to personally know Jesus Christ as Messiah.**

B. It's in this, the 74th teaching of our verse by verse study of the book of Matthew, that we get to consider some of the most consequential words in all of history...**for you see, the words Matthew uses to close out his namesake Gospel are a battle cry for those calling Him LORD!** They are also a great measuring rod in Jesus' command that we examine ourselves as to whether we are in the faith! (2 Corinthians 13:5)

2. Before we get to Matthew's final words, I want to give you all a fair warning. **His words call us to something Jesus gives and we desperately need!** Something the enemy has had great success in discounting, sidelining, or corrupting in the church today.

A. Yes, there are some hard things in here today. **Things compelling an inescapable choice, complete with inescapable consequences.** They are hard because they make us uncomfortable and they confront our priorities and motivations.

B. Yet, there are also some sweet things in this teaching today. **They are sweet because God is faithful and His promises sure.** They are sweet because they offer us a sure path that is rightly called our victory in Him.

3. In examining the various accounts of the risen Lord here in the New Testament, we find at least 11 appearances. In five of these appearances, including our passage today, Jesus tells His followers to go preach the Gospel and making disciples.
4. Jesus' love is not as the world loves with an affirming love. Rather, His love is a transforming love...it is a love so bold and so great because He loves us too much to leave us the way we are – separated from Him lost in our sin. You see, Jesus came NOT just that your destiny could change, but that you will change...and in changing, you will become instruments of His righteousness, transforming more lives as the Gospel takes root in people's hearts.

Slide 4

Slide 6

II. Matthew 28:16-17: To Doubt is Human While Faith is of God

1. Absent Judas, the 11 disciples headed to Galilee as instructed. This was not a walk over to the next neighborhood or even a long walk to an adjoining city. This, depending upon where this mountain was in Galilee, could have been as far as a 4-day walk.
 - A. Given their well-chronicled history, they undoubtedly spent this extended time reviewing, discussing, arguing, and otherwise struggling with all that was transpiring.
 - i. They had struggled from the first time He prophesied of His own death...they struggled with the idea that He was not a conquering King...they struggled with their purpose...they struggled with many of the lessons He taught...they struggled with their place in His work AND their place amongst themselves...they struggled with their own limitations...and yes, they were struggling with the resurrection of the Son of God AND just what, beyond their great thankfulness, all this meant to them.
2. I don't think we need to read the doubt Matthew noted in v17 as denial of Jesus as Messiah. In context, their doubt seems best

understood as a wavering or hesitation¹. The reason for reading it this way is two-fold: (1) first, Christ's authority was settled in their hearts as we see them following His command to go to Galilee and (2) their response upon seeing Him was worship.

A. I don't know about you, but I am thankful for their hesitation. It not only speaks of their humanity (comforting to me, because it reveals their weaknesses are not unlike my own), but it further establishes their credibility as not a bunch of yes-men, but of men seeking truth and living out what they experienced and believed, all the way to their deaths - most as martyrs.

Their responses reveal the challenges of faith in following Christ while revealing that He is faithful to give His children all that we need in persevering as overcomers (**John 16:33**).

B. A final word...The word for worship here means "to express in attitude or gesture for one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure"². In this, we are reminded of the requirement of faith for ones relationship with Christ...faith that is itself a gift from God.

Put simply, the disciples doubt spoke of their humaneness while their worship revealed Jesus' deity.

Slide 8

III. Matthew 28:18-20: Our Shared Mission

1. Matthew's final words are NOT of the further training and accomplishments of the disciples. They are NOT of Jesus' glorious ascension to the Father. What they are is an unmistakable shared mission! A mission, that like our Lord, is unchanging and uncompromising. Frankly, a mission in which the church might rightly be considered an abject failure in effort and results.

Slide 10

¹William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 252.

² William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 882.

2. In John 14:15, the Lord tells us that if we love Him, we are to keep His commandments. Over the last few years I have shared with you a variety of statistics indicating that the church is on life-support with regard to fulfilling the Lord's command to preach, teach, and share in purposefully making disciples of ALL nations. The numbers have long hovered well under <5% of churches having sustained efforts toward fulfilling our duty, responsibility, and privilege of the Great Commission ...a pitiful number that I pray will grieve our hearts as it surely must grieve Jesus'.

3. Some things of note in our verses:

Slide 12

A. First, Jesus notes that He has been given "**All** authority"; meaning He has absolute power, absolute authority, and the absolute right to exercise them. His authority extends from earth to heaven and is over all things and all people at all times.

B. Second, Jesus exercises this authority over you and me in the here-and-now. Now, before we get into exactly how He exercises His authority, I want to note that many have modified, tortured, or even discarded the plain meaning of what Jesus is communicating through Matthew in our passage today. Some common things maybe you too have thought or even said include, but are no means limited to:

➤ Don't know how.	➤ Not my gift.	➤ To busy.
➤ Didn't know.	➤ Poor leadership.	➤ Uncaring.
➤ Only for Jesus' Disciples.	➤ Uncomfortable.	➤ Too hard.
➤ No one wants to hear it.	➤ Too messy.	➤ My pastor doesn't...
➤ Afraid.	➤ Not my responsibility.	➤ Don't know how to start.

Slide 14

i. Let me assure you that when we read "go", it actually means you "go". It means go to the next cubicle...go into children's ministry...go to your neighborhood...go to the marketplace...go to Monetta or NJ, or wherever He may send you...and make no mistake, He calls us to go!

- ii. When we read “make disciples”...[we are to be purposeful in doing our part of “making disciples”](#)...and to do so of “all nations”.

The experts tell us that one of the great weaknesses of the modern church is that discipleship & evangelism (and yes, these are part of the same continuum) are rare and getting rarer still. [We recently had some folks come to share the pitiful state of discipleship in the church here in Aiken and invite us to staff their discipleship program.](#) When we showed them all the materials we create and distribute and all the equipping we are doing, it is fair to say they were surprised, maybe even astounded.

Now, I guess that can make us feel pretty good. [You know, we are doing better than most after all.](#) Except the problem we have is that Jesus didn’t command us to do better than other local bodies of the church. [He commanded us to go and make disciples](#)...this means preaching, inviting, teaching, discipling, and otherwise sharing the hope and love of Jesus Christ.

So, CCA, how are we doing? [I know it’s uncomfortable to be put on the spot, but are you purposefully and actively involved in fulfilling the great commission?](#) If your answer is yes, then PTL! If your answer is no OR yes, but you know you are to do more, today is your lucky day...[we have opportunities, so sign up in the lobby or chat with the Connect Team.](#)

- iii. The same is true with baptizing and teaching/training the disciples we make to observe all things as He commands....[we are to do our God-given part in first drawing in and then leading disciples to persist in knowing, guarding, obeying, and keeping faithful in living out and fulfilling “all His commands”](#).

Frankly, all too often we see the exact opposite of what Christ commands here in the book of Matthew. We see large swaths of the church willingly, even desiring to, sit under incomplete teaching, teaching that will offend few if any (and God's word does offend), teaching that affirms rather than being an instrument of transformation, and outright false teaching.

Please note that with the exception of the false teaching, I am not impugning peoples motives. I am just noting that they are missing the mark of teaching all that Jesus commands. It grieves me that Calvary Chapels have a distinctive of teaching the entire counsel of God's word...I cannot fathom anything that should be less a distinctive across all of God's church!

The results of NOT teaching all of Jesus' commands, are often cheap grace, affirming rather than transforming love, salvation devoid of surrender and obedience, a decided absence of a personal relationship with Christ, and victory being defined by comfortability, sensuality, materiality, lack of conflict, and other unbiblical standards. The results are often a church living in its power for its purposes...a position that, no matter their apparent success, is disobedient to Jesus.

C. One last "all" that jumps out of our passage is that He will be with His disciples "always". This truth offers great comfort, assurance, confidence, and the clear reminder that we can only accomplish the great commission because of His presence and power in, on, and through our lives.

Slide 18

IV. Matthew 28:18-20 Revisited: Power Needed, Power Given

1. Please go back to the beginning of v19 with me. The first time through, we skipped by the word "therefore" and it is critical that we consider its implications in light of Jesus possessing absolute

authority, absolute power, and the right to exercise them both along with His commitment to be with His disciples always.

Simply put, the “therefore” gives Jesus disciples then and now, the right to make disciples...while unsaid, I believe it is implied that doing so is only through His authority and power and NOT our own. This is further amplified by His faithfulness in being with His disciples always. In essence, He commands them while also empowering them to fulfill the great commission.

Slide 20

2. Following Luke’s account of the Great Commission, in Luke 24:49, we read:

“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” - Luke 24:49

In Acts 1:8, Luke offers some additional information:

Slide 22

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” - Acts 1:8

A. It seems clear that once empowered by the Spirit, His disciples are to witness Him in making disciples of all nations until the end of the age. Interestingly, the word for witness can also mean being a martyr for one’s testimony. The blessings of the Spirit for us and to those we witness for Jesus’ glory are many and transformative...a short list includes:

- i. The Holy Spirit has the power to give hope (**Romans 8:14**);
- ii. He has the power to guide people into all truth (**John 16:13**);
- iii. The Holy Spirit seals us to Christ Jesus (**Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:9**);
- iv. God’s love is poured into our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 5:5**); and John 6:63 says:

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. - John 6:63

- B. I don't know any Christian that is not immeasurably thankful for the Spirit's power in these ways!

Yet, when we are told to witness Him and make disciples for Him, there is no line of people saying "pick me" for our outreaches, for discipling others, for serving in our children's ministry, or any other of the number of opportunities God has graciously given us.

- C. What we have seen in our study today is that no matter one's education, background, cultures, job, health, or skills, Jesus did NOT give His followers a shared, supernatural mission which could be accomplished apart from Himself much less in our own strength, wisdom, and power.

He sent His Spirit, in part, that His disciples may have supernatural powers to fulfill our mission. *Supernatural powers such as Godly wisdom, leadership, prophesy, discernment, healing, and tongues.* Yet, many or even most of us RESIST the very power of the Spirit we desperately need to fulfill His commands of witnessing Him and making disciples. *Sometimes, we do this because of fears, doubts, and uncertainty...sometimes because of real or perceived abuses...sometimes because it's uncomfortable...and this list of excuses is never ending so long as our default is to think of "me" and not "He". FLASH SURVEY: Whether actively or passively, how many of us have resisted God giving you His power for His purposes?*

- D. As our eyes and heart linger on ourselves, our vision becomes blurred as we no longer think of our high calling to please God...to fear Him... and to live our lives in absolute awe of His authority, power, and right in being the Lord of our lives.

V. Closing: A Message From Heaven

1. Here at the end of the book of Matthew, we are being given a message from heaven: “If you are Mine, then use “My” power to make disciples – those who to know, love, look like, and will obey Me.”
2. And so, listen to me now, it’s one thing for you and I to RESIST God’s commands, calling, and power, it’s quite another to REJECT them!

Today is a new day. Let’s all of us stop making excuses and simply obey our Lord. If you don’t know how to overcome your resistance, please use the sign up in the lobby or email us at office@ccaiken.org to schedule some time to talk with me or another of our church leadership. Together, we will find the open door God has for you.

Matthew 28:16-20

A Message From Heaven – Part 2

I. Introduction: Famous Last Words

- “Jesus came NOT just that your destiny could change, but that you will change.”

Additional Scripture References: 2 Co 13:5

II. Matthew 28:16-17: To Doubt is Human While Faith is of God

- “The disciples doubt spoke of their humaneness while their worship revealed Jesus’ deity.”

Additional Scripture References: Jn 16:33

III. Matthew 28:18-20: Our Shared Mission

- Jesus has absolute power, absolute authority, and the absolute right to exercise them.
- Jesus words carry meaning...e.g., “Go” means go and “Make disciples” means make disciples.

Additional Scripture References: Jn 14:15;

IV. Matthew 28:28-20 Revisited: Power Needed, Power Given

- “The blessings of the Spirit for us and to those we witness for Jesus’ glory are many and transformative”.
- There are many reasons and ways people resist the power of the Holy Spirit we so desperately need.

Additional Scripture References: Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8; Ro 8:14; Jn 16:13; Eph 1:13-14; Ro 8:9; Jn 6:63

V. Closing: A Message From Heaven

- “...it’s one thing for you and I to RESIST God’s commands, calling, and power, it’s quite another to REJECT them!”

5-Day Devotional Matthew 28:16-20 A Message From Heaven Part 2

Day 1: The Authority of Christ

Reading: Mt 28:16-20

Devotional: As we begin this journey, we focus on Jesus' ultimate authority. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." This statement is both comforting and challenging. It reminds us that our Lord is sovereign over all creation, yet it also calls us to submission.

Reflect on areas in your life where you may be resisting Christ's authority. How might fully acknowledging His lordship change your perspective and actions? Today, consciously surrender one area of your life to Christ's authority, trusting in His wisdom and love.

Day 2: Worship through Doubt

Reading: Mt 28:16-17, Heb 11:1-6

Devotional: The disciples' response to the risen Christ is a powerful picture of faith amidst uncertainty. They worshipped, even as some doubted. This reminds us that faith and doubt often coexist, but worship can be our anchor. When doubts arise, choose to focus on who God is rather than on your uncertainties.

Consider a current doubt or fear in your life. How might intentional worship help you navigate this challenge? Today, spend time in praise, declaring God's attributes even if you don't feel it emotionally.

Day 3: The Great Commission

Reading: Mt 28:19-20, Act 1:8

Devotional: Jesus' final command to His disciples is our mission too - to make disciples of all nations. This calling can feel overwhelming but remember that Jesus promises His presence as we go. The Great Commission isn't just for missionaries or pastors; it's for every believer.

How are you currently participating in this mission? It might be through prayer, encouragement, teaching, or simply living out your faith daily. Ask God to show you one specific way you can be more intentional about disciple-making in your current context.

Day 4: Empowering of the Holy Spirit**Reading: John 14:15-17, Acts 2:1-4**

Devotional: Jesus promised to be with us always, and He fulfills this through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers us to live out our calling and to be witnesses for Christ. Often, we try to serve God in our own strength, forgetting the supernatural power available to us.

Reflect on times when you've felt the Spirit's guidance or empowerment. How might your life and ministry look different if you relied more fully on the Spirit's power? Today, consciously invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts, words, and actions.

Day 5: Perseverance in Faith**Reading: 2 Cor 13:5, Heb 12:1-3**

Devotional: The Christian life is a journey of continual growth and self-examination. Paul encourages us to "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith." This isn't meant to create doubt, but to ensure we're actively growing in Christ.

Consider your spiritual journey over the past year. Where have you seen growth? Where do you need to refocus? Remember, perseverance in faith is not about perfection, but about consistently turning back to Christ. Today, identify one spiritual discipline you can commit to strengthening, trusting that God will use it to deepen your faith.

Small Group Study Guide

Matthew 28:16-20

A Message From Heaven Part 2

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would speak to your heart and inspire you to action.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth.
2. The Great Commission is a shared mission for all believers.
3. Making disciples involves going, baptizing, and teaching.
4. The Holy Spirit empowers us to fulfill the Great Commission.
5. Many Christians resist or refuse God's commands and calling.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. What stood out to you most from the sermon? Why?
2. The sermon mentions the disciples' doubt and worship. How do you relate to their experience? Have you ever felt both doubt and faith simultaneously in your walk with Christ?
3. Why do you think so few churches are actively engaged in fulfilling the Great Commission? What barriers do you see in your own life?
4. The pastor listed several common excuses people use to avoid evangelism and discipleship. Which of these have you used or heard others use? How can we overcome these excuses?
5. How does understanding Jesus' authority impact our approach to the Great Commission?
6. What role does the Holy Spirit play in fulfilling our mission? How have you experienced the Spirit's power in your own life?

7. The sermon mentions "cheap grace" and "affirming love" versus "transforming love." How do you see these concepts playing out in modern Christianity?
8. In what ways might you be resisting God's power for His purposes in your life?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Identify one specific way you can actively participate in fulfilling the Great Commission this week. Share with the group and commit to following through.
2. Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any areas where you might be resisting His power or calling in your life.
3. Choose a verse from the sermon (e.g., Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:15, Acts 1:8) to memorize and meditate on this week.
4. If you're not currently involved in discipleship, research opportunities within your church or community to get started.
5. Share the Gospel with at least one person this week, relying on the Holy Spirit's power and guidance.

Closing Prayer: Thank God for His authority, power, and presence in our lives. Ask for His help in overcoming resistance to His calling and for boldness in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Discussion Questions
Matthew 28:16-20
A Message From Heaven Part 2

1. How does the concept of Jesus having 'all authority' challenge or affirm your understanding of His role in your life and in the world?
2. In what ways might your own doubts or hesitations, like those of the disciples, actually strengthen your faith journey rather than hinder it?
3. How does the Great Commission's call to 'go and make disciples' apply to your daily life, and what practical steps can you take to fulfill this mission?
4. What barriers or excuses have you encountered (in yourself or others) that prevent full engagement with the Great Commission, and how can these be overcome?
5. How does the promise of Jesus being with us 'always' impact your approach to evangelism and discipleship?
6. In what ways might the church today be falling short in teaching 'all things' that Jesus commanded, and what could be done to address this?
7. How does the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for mission challenge your current understanding and experience of Christian life?
8. What does it mean to you personally to 'witness' for Christ, and how might this understanding need to evolve?
9. How can we balance the tension between relying on God's supernatural power and using our own efforts in fulfilling the Great Commission?
10. What would it look like for you to move from passively resisting to actively embracing God's power for His purposes in your life?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Matthew 28:16-20

A Message From Heaven Part 2

1. Jesus's Last Words to Us

Discuss as a family the importance of remembering and following Jesus last words. Why should we follow them?

2. The Challenge of Faith

It was noted that even the disciples showed hesitation and doubt. Share a story or an instance where you, or someone you know, faced doubts or challenges in faith. How was it overcome, and what lessons were learned from it?

3. Understanding the Great Commission

The sermon emphasizes the call to make disciples of all nations. Talk about what this means in practical terms for your family. Are there ways you can collectively or individually spread positive messages or support your community?

4. Obedience and Authority

Discuss the concept of Jesus's absolute authority as mentioned in the sermon. How do you as a family understand and apply the idea of authority and obedience in your daily lives?

5. Embracing the Spirit's Power

The sermon's closing remarks highlight the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Have an open conversation about the spiritual gifts you believe each family member possesses and how these gifts can be used to support each other and those around you.

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Matthew 28:16-20

A Message From Heaven Part 2

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

Sharing Kindness: Teach children the importance of sharing and being kind to others as a way to show love, just as Jesus taught us to spread the message of love and kindness.

Discussion Question: Can you think of a time when you shared something with a friend or family member? How did it make you feel? What are some ways you can show kindness to others at school or in your neighborhood?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

Understanding God's Mission for Us: Help children understand their role in God's mission by encouraging them to stand up for what is right and be an example to others, like sharing the Good News in their own way.

Discussion Question: How do you think you can be a good example of love and kindness to your friends? Have you ever felt like doing something nice for someone but hesitated? What might help you take that step next time?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Living out Faith to Make a Difference:** Encourage teens to be proactive in living out their faith by engaging in discussions about integrity and standing up for their beliefs in both physical and digital spaces.

Discussion Question: What does it mean to you to live out your faith in everyday life, like school or online? Can you think of a time when you had to make a choice about what is right, even if it wasn't the popular thing to do? How did you handle it?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

Matthew 28:16-20

A Message From Heaven Part 2

1. Walking in Authentic Faith in Group Settings

Application: As Jesus calls us to make disciples and live out our faith, we can reflect His love by being authentic and considerate in group settings.

Bible Basis: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Scenario and Discussion: In a group project, everyone else wants to take shortcuts that compromise quality. How can you encourage integrity and excellence, reflecting your faith, to help your team?

2. Building Genuine Relationships

Application: Just as Jesus's love was transformative and not just affirming, we are called to build relationships that foster growth and understanding.

Bible Basis: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

Scenario and Discussion: You have a friend who is struggling with a tough decision and asks for your advice. How can you offer guidance that is both supportive and honest, helping them grow spiritually and personally?

3. Upholding Faith on Social Media

Application: We are instructed to go and share the Gospel, which includes digital spaces. This requires grace and truth in online interactions.

Bible Basis: "Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

Scenario and Discussion: While online, you encounter a conversation that goes against your beliefs. How can you respond respectfully and thoughtfully, sharing your perspective in a way that represents your faith effectively?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.