THE SCROLLS

Measures of a Disciple | Matthew 28:18-20

Life Lesson

The fulfillment of the Great Commission is found not in self-preservation or personal comfort, but in surrendering to a purpose far greater than ourselves. When we align our daily lives with Christ's authority, we move from passive consumers of life to active participants in an eternal mission. Following Him closely requires us to step beyond our comfort zones to love and serve those who are different from us, yet it frees us from the soul-crushing weight of self-reliance. As we step out in courageous obedience, we discover the profound peace of His central promise: we never walk alone, for our sovereign God goes with us into every moment of every day.

Examine Scripture

Read Matthew 28:18-20

As you read Scripture, slow down and ask these three questions to move from information to transformation:

1. What does this passage reveal about who God is?

2. How is God calling you to grow or change?

3. What is God leading you to do or who is He calling you to be in your everyday life?

Moved by Mission

The local church is constantly tempted by a subtle, inward pull: to turn its resources, energy, and focus entirely inward. When comfort replaces call, a congregation easily degenerates into a social club designed to satisfy its members' preferences rather than advance the kingdom of God. Yet the biblical vision for the Church is vastly different. We were created not to curate our own spiritual comfort but to bring ultimate glory to God by declaring His gospel to the ends of the earth.

In the climactic conclusion of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gathers His disciples on a Galilean mountain to deliver what we now call the Great Commission. This is not merely a program for a missions team or an optional addendum for the super-spiritual; it is the core identity, heartbeat, and driving force of every true follower of Christ. In these three short verses, Jesus exposes the roots of human doubt, affirms His absolute authority, redefines true discipleship, and promises His unbroken, abiding presence. As we unpack this sovereign mandate, we discover that gospel-centered mission is not something we simply do; it is the direct overflow of a life captivated by the glory of our resurrected King.

Before we can even dive into the selected text, we need to understand the setting. Look back at (vs. 16-17): "The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted." Notice how the final scene of Matthew's Gospel is remarkably raw. Standing before the risen, glorified Christ on a Galilean mountain, the disciples' reactions split into two familiar camps: some worshipped, but some doubted.

Scripture refuses to sanitize human weakness. Even in the presence of the resurrected Lord, skepticism lingers alongside adoration. Some said, "Okay, Jesus, you performed many miracles and wonders. You were crucified and raised from the dead. You are now ascending into Heaven. Yeah, I still don't buy it. I'm not all in." This honest portrayal of doubt grounds the mission in reality: Christ does

Personal Notes

not wait for our faith to be flawless before He deploys us. He enlists flawed, doubting people.

Worship is the foundation and fuel of our mission. When we behold the majesty of God, as Isaiah (Isaiah 6) and John (Revelation 4–5) do, our self-serving comfort shatters. A church that exists for itself has stopped truly worshiping. By contrast, a church that truly worships is propelled by God's glory and majesty to fulfill the Great Commission. It ceases to be a box to check and becomes a life to live.

"Jesus came near and said to them, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.'"

The Great Commission is structurally anchored by two massive, unshakable declarations: Christ's total authority before the command (v. 18), and Christ's continuous presence after it (v. 20). The mission of the Church is not born out of human initiative, spiritual idealism, or institutional expansion. It flows entirely from the lordship and authority of Christ.

The word for authority is ἐξουσία (exousia). It denotes absolute legal right, executive jurisdiction, and sovereign sway. Jesus does not claim a localized or tentative power; He claims dominion over every spiritual principality in the heavens and every power on earth. In other words, Jesus has the full authority (power) to accomplish what He wants! We see this in (Rev. 5:6-7): "Then I saw one like a slaughtered lamb standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth. He went and took the scroll out of the right hand of the one seated on the throne." Jesus alone has the authority to take the scroll out of the right hand of the Father. The right hand symbolizes power and authority, yet Jesus took the scroll. It was not handed to Him; He took it. This demonstrates that Jesus truly does have all authority and power. Daniel even prophesied this in (Dan. 7:13-14): "and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed."

Obedience to the Great Commission flows from recognizing this sovereign authority. As Thomas Watson observed: "To obey God in love is to obey Him with delight. True obedience is not constrained, but voluntary." Because Jesus holds all authority, our mission is not an anxious attempt to build an empire; it is an obedient participation in His already-established Kingdom. The

Personal Notes

Great Commission is both a command and an invitation. In His authority, Jesus commands us to obey the Great Commission. In His love, He invites us to be active participants in the expansion of His Kingdom.

"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, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."

Here is the crux of our mission: go and make disciples. In the Greek text, there is only one primary imperative verb: μαθητεύσατε (mathēteusate, "make disciples"). This is the straightforward command. You are to make disciples. The accompanying actions—going, baptizing, and teaching—are participles that describe how disciple-making unfolds. In other words, as you go, as you baptize, and as you teach, you are ultimately making disciples. This is the measure by which we will be judged, not attendance or activity, but the making of disciples.

The Greek word πορευθέντες (poreuhentes) is better rendered as "as you are going." When Jesus said, "Go!" He was not saying that we should go only on mission trips or go elsewhere. He is saying, "As you are already going!" As we go to work, school, family reunions, even Walmart, we ought to be fulfilling the Great Commission by sharing the Gospel and making disciples.

So, what is a disciple? Simply, it is a follower of Jesus. But the term carries more weight than a simple verbal expression of being a Christian. The Greek μαθητής (mathetes) draws deeply from the Hebrew concept of the talmid, a devoted student of a rabbi. In ancient Jewish culture, the ultimate goal of a talmid was not merely to memorize a teacher's lectures but to absorb his very way of life. The disciples would walk closely behind their rabbi on dusty roads. The rabbi would always lead; he was in front. The favored student would walk behind him. By the end of the trip, the student's tunic would be covered in the dust stirred up by the rabbi. It was a sign of honor. This led to a customary blessing among the talmidim: "May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi." To be a disciple of Christ is to follow so closely that His character, love, and mission rub off on every part of our daily existence. You cannot lead others down a path you are not walking yourself.

The word ἔθνη (ethne) refers to distinct people groups, cultures, and language groups; literally, "those who are not like you." It is natural for communities to gravitate toward comfort, familiarity, and demographic sameness. Yet Gospel-centered mission violently shatters our comfort zones. It compels the Church to look beyond

Personal Reflection

1. Like the disciples who doubted while others worshipped, what keeps you from offering Jesus complete, unreserved worship today?

2. If you truly believe that "all authority in heaven and on earth" belongs to Jesus, which specific area of your daily life are you still keeping under your own authority?

3. Are you following Jesus so closely in your everyday routine that His "dust" is visible on you, or are you following at such a distance that your life looks indistinguishable from the rest of the world's?

4. Who is the "person not like me" on the everyday path you have been avoiding or neglecting to share Christ with?

5. In your moments of spiritual exhaustion, fear, or hesitation about sharing your faith, are you relying on your own strength or leaning into Jesus' promise and presence?

Commentaries

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament Edited by Kenneth Barker

New Bible Commentary Edited by D. A. Carson

NIV Application Commentary: Matthew by Micheal Wilkins

Matthew by John MacArthur

Mt. Zion's Mission

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to **MAKE**, **MATURE**, and **MULTIPLY** disciples of Jesus Christ.*

socioeconomic, racial, and cultural barriers, declaring that the grace of Christ is meant to reach every corner of human society.

A part of making disciples is leading people to a public profession of faith through baptism. Baptism is a symbolic expression of union with the Triune God. The singular "in the name" (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα), alongside the three distinct Persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), serves as one of the clearest Trinitarian formulations in Scripture. Though baptism is symbolic, it is a powerful symbol and a part of the Great Commission. In other words, baptism is not an option. It is a command.

Also, we are to teach as a part of disciple-making. Not merely imparting intellectual information, but forming life obedience through the teaching of the Word. You cannot truly be a disciple if you are not reading and studying the Word of God.

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

That is the promise! It is not health, money, popularity, a growing church, or even safety. He simply promises to be with us. The phrase translated "always" is πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας (pasas tas hēmeras), which literally means "all the days." It guarantees Christ's active, personal presence through dark, exhausting, fruitful, and mundane days alike. This statement frames the entire Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 1:23, Jesus is introduced as Immanuel ("God with us"). Here, at the Gospel's conclusion, He promises to remain with us until the consummation of time. John Flavel reflected on Christ's presence with His ministers and servants: "Christ is with His people in all their labors, in all their trials, in all their sufferings... He does not send us alone, but walks with us in the work."

The Great Commission is not an impossible burden placed on our shoulders; it is a grand invitation to join the unstoppable kingdom of Jesus. When we recognize that mission begins with worship, rests on Christ's absolute authority, and is sustained by His abiding presence, our fear gives way to joyful obedience. We stop asking what the Church can do for us and begin offering our lives for His glory.

Jesus has not called us to coast through our faith or simply exist within the walls of a building. He sends us out as His disciples to make disciples. Whether crossing the street to love a neighbor who looks nothing like us or crossing the ocean to reach the unreached, we go with the absolute assurance that the Lord of heaven and earth goes with us.