

## ***Redeemed Sinners Devoted to God's Mission***

Matthew 28:16-20

### **Intro: The Harvest is Ripe**

I read an article recently that said the city of Austin (not Austin metro, but the city itself) has just surpassed 1 million people in population. KABC was founded in 1938—88 years ago. Do you know the population of Austin in 1938? 65,000. Which means, 935,000 people have been added to this city since this church was founded and that doesn't include all the people who've come and gone since.

Have you seen pictures the city's transformation over the years? **[Ask for pics: 1938, 2000, 2026]**  
*I was driving with my Elijah and Tyler and we got a view of the city, and I said, "There's a visual of one million souls who need Jesus."*

God put this church in this location 88 years ago for a reason. And the reason is that the members of this church, throughout its history, would make disciples of the Jesus here in Austin and beyond. God put you in this church, at the time he did, for a reason...to make disciples.

Do you know that? You are not here merely to BE a disciple of Jesus. You are here to MAKE disciples of Jesus. In fact, inherent to what it means to BE a disciple of Jesus is to MAKE disciples of Jesus. If you say you are a follower of Jesus, but you are not helping others follow Jesus, I'm not sure you know what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

[We are wrapping up series on who we are as a church: *Redeemed sinners devoted to God's Word, God's People, and God's Mission...All for God's Glory. Today: God's Mission.*]

### **The Responsibility of Every Christian**

By "God's Mission," I mean, the mission God gave us, the church. I wanna argue from Matt. 28 that you should feel the joyful obligation to make disciples—the glorious burden to tell others about Christ and help them follow Christ.

YOU have that responsibility. [**vv16-17**] I've heard people say, since Jesus is speaking here only to the 11 disciples (remember, Judas is out of the picture)...the command he's about to give to make disciples applies only to them.

*I literally heard a man utter those words to me over lunch. "I don't need to share the gospel because that command is just for Jesus' apostles." I thought, "How convenient!"*

The NT teaches every Christian must help others follow Christ. One example: 2 Tim. 2:2, PAUL says to TIMOTHY, "...[the gospel] you have heard from me...entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The pattern is PAUL to TIMOTHY to OTHER MEN to OTHERS whom those men will teach. The gospel baton keeps getting passed on.

We are called to disciple others towards discipling others who will also disciple others (and it just continues). That's the NT pattern. If that wasn't the pattern, Christianity would've died when the last disciple of the apostles died.

This passage is meant to empower us to take on the task of discipleship. Let's look at *three empowering reasons* to make disciples.

**1) We make disciples because *the Son of God bridged heaven and earth.* [v18] Now, with that**

kind of set up, what would expect him to say next? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and conquer all evil in the world. Go and transform society/ culture so it becomes Christianized. Go and end all social injustices, alleviate all poverty, find a cure for cancer, heal all broken relationships, end all the effects of the Fall on the world.”

That’s not what he says. He says, “Go make disciples. Go make followers of me.” Why set up that command with the cosmic claim: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”? Let’s figure out what he means.

When you hear the words “heaven and earth,” what other verse in the Bible comes to mind? Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Jesus is drawing our attention back to the beginning of creation— God, as Creator, made heaven and earth.

But something went wrong. When man sinned, separation came between heaven and earth— God and man. In fact, Matthew makes that very

point throughout his book in his use of this word pair, “heaven and earth.”

As a result of sin, there’s a tension/separation that has existed between heaven and earth (God and man)...

- **[3:1-2]** Interestingly, all the other gospel writers speak of the kingdom of GOD—but Matthew calls it the kingdom of HEAVEN. Why? He’s making a point: God’s reign in heaven is now invading earth.
- **[3:16-17]**—See what’s happening here? Because of Jesus, heaven is opened.
- **[6:9-10]**—God’s will and ways are always being done in heaven, but because this world has been corrupted by sin, what happens here goes against God’s desired will. So Jesus says, “Pray that earth will become like heaven—God’s will would be done here as it is in heaven.”

Let’s read 28:18 with this framework. **[v18]** See what’s happening? Jesus is the bridge between heaven and earth. How? The passage just prior to this describes his resurrection from the dead. That’s how! **[Gospel—appeal]**

So in light of THAT, Jesus calls us to make disciples. Can you see how freeing this is? Think about the call of ANY OTHER religious leader to make disciples of them and their religion. What are they calling people to do?

They're calling people to EARN their way to... God, heaven, a higher power, or some sort of afterlife. And so, disciple-making in every other religion is helping others EARN their way.

But Jesus EARNED our way! And that frees us to make disciples by first telling people that: "Jesus paid it all! He bridged the gap between heaven and earth, so trust HIM! And because you are accepted by the Father because of him, let me show you what it looks like to live a life of obedience to him—not as a way of BECOMING accepted by him, but because you ARE."

We make disciples because Jesus has bridged the gap between heaven and earth.

**2) We make disciples because *the Son of God told us to.* [vv19-20a] The word "therefore" means, "Because all authority in heaven and on**

earth has been given to me...because I bridged the gap between God and man, go do what I'm commanding you to do." That should be enough for us. If the resurrected Son of God tells us to do something, we should do it!

What should we do? The driving command in this sentence is "make disciples." And every other part modifies that command. So what does it mean to make a disciple of Jesus?

He first says, "Go." Some have wrongly concluded that, since this word is a participle, it should be translated, "As you go," implying that you just kind of try to make disciples along the way of life, whenever it comes up. *So if you're going to the coffee shop, you're actually just going to get coffee, but the barista might happen to ask you a religious question, so you take that opportunity to talk to them.*

I think that misses the point. When a participle like "go" is tied to an imperative/command "make disciples," it shares that same imperative force. So this is a command to "go...act...take initiative. Passivity is not an option.

This might mean asking someone in this church to meet up regularly for prayer and Bible study. It may mean talking through a specific sin struggle with a trusted person to hold you accountable. It may mean taking a new Christian under your wing and just going over the basics of the Christian life with them. And it certainly means looking for opportunities to tell the non-Christians about the gospel.

Jesus says, we must GO and make disciples...OF WHOM? [v19, **“of all nations”**] Remember, the original hearers would've been primarily of the NATION of Israel. That was the people whom God chose to covenant with in the OT.

And one of the first covenants God made was with the father of the nation of Israel, namely, Abraham. God said in Gen. 12, “I will make of you a great nation [referring to Israel]...and in you ALL THE FAMILIES of the earth shall be blessed.” That promise is fulfilled in Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations.

“Tell every tribe, tongue, language about me and what I did for sinners like them and call

them to give up their lives to follow me.”  
Disciple-making is for all peoples. The word “nations” in the original language is *ethne*. That sounds like the word *ethnic*. Jesus is saying, “I’m commanding you to make disciples of every kind of people group.” The gospel is not for one kind of people. It is for ALL peoples!

Many of us gravitate towards people who are just like us—they look like us, they’re in the same life stage as us, they have the same hobbies. But if the church is to be made up of all kinds of people, we gotta to push ourselves a bit and get to know people that aren’t just like us.

It is a beautiful thing when the church is made of all different ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses... people of all kinds, speaking the truth in love to one another. The gospel is for all peoples.

This truth has implications for missions. As diverse as Austin is, we’re not being faithful if we wait for different language groups to come to us. We gotta go. I wanna see many of our own members sent to take the gospel to the

nations because they hear the call of the risen, all-authoritative Son of God to GO.

*Grab the Missions Prayer Guide and pray for a different language group every day. We gotta GO, but it starts with getting a vision for it.*

What else does the command to make disciples of all nations include? **[v19]** This implies conversion—a person trusts in Jesus and *then* publicly confesses their allegiance to Jesus through water baptism...identifying with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, and declaring to all, “I am a follower of Jesus.” Baptism implies conversion.

But it also implies incorporation into a local church. Know why? In the NT, the practice of baptism was not a practice separate from the local church. Christians were not baptized and then put out on their own. Their baptism was their official/formal incorporation into the local church (c.f., Acts 2).

So making disciples first means speaking the truth of the gospel to others, and when they

believe, they go public with their faith through baptism, which becomes their commitment to a local church.

Then what? **[v20a]** Jesus wants disciples not merely decisions. Many churches (usually those who care way too much about high numbers) make a big deal about how many “*decisions*” were made for Christ.

*I heard about a pastor of a small town who boasted of 1,000 baptisms in a year. Another pastor said, “Wow, so your church grew by a thousand people in a year. That must’ve had a significant impact on your town. That many more people being disciplined.”*

*He said, “No, our membership really didn’t grow, and no, our town is the same.” The other asked, “Then where are all those new believers who got baptized. Surely they’re being disciplined in your church.” He said, “Well some stuck around but we don’t know where the others are.”*

Do you see the problem with this? This is precisely why the NT does not separate baptism

from church membership...because the church is the primary context in which the newly baptized Christian is disciplined in their faith. Baptism is not just ME making a public profession. It's a public profession to those who will hold me accountable to that profession and disciple me after I get baptized.

*I can't tell you how many times people from outside this church have asked me to baptize them when they had no intention of joining our church. Our baptism numbers could be boosted! But we're not interested in making numbers. We're interested in making disciples!*

*So for example, when we baptized Spence few weeks ago, that was his public declaration of his allegiance to Jesus before y'all (Kinney) who now have the weighty responsibility to help him grow as a follower of Jesus.*

Our goal is not to get someone to pray a prayer or walk an aisle. Our goal is to teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

Notice: we don't just teach. We teach *to obey*. Our goal in discipleship is to help people know what it means and what it looks like to obey Jesus. *That can happen through...*

- *Encouragement*: "Sister, I noticed the way you patiently/gently talked to that church member—keep it up!"
- *Exhortation*: "Brother, it seems you're putting too much worth in your work...to the point where you're neglecting your family. Is that true?"
- *Example*: "C'mon over to my house to hang out." And they watch the way you interact with your spouse and kids.

Discipleship is not an option for Christians because the risen, authoritative Son of God commands us to do it.

For some of you that is extremely intimidating.

- "What do I have to offer? I don't know enough."
- OR "How do I even start a conversation about Jesus with my friends or co-workers,"
- OR "My life is a wreck. I don't think I'm in a place to help others." (There may be some

truth in that. You may be dealing with a particularly enslaving pattern of sin that requires others to pour into you more than you're pouring into others for a time. But don't be content with staying there!)

For some, the thought of making disciples feels overwhelming. That's why you need is to hear the last point.

**3) We make disciples because *the Son of God is with us.* [v20b]** “Behold! Look! Consider! Wake up to this reality: I AM WITH YOU!” That's one of the most comforting truths in the Bible. You're NOT alone. Jesus is with you, by his Spirit.

But this verse is not merely meant to bring us general comfort (though it does and should). These words correspond to what Jesus just said. He commands us to make disciples and then he promises us with his presence. Why?

Jesus knows the task of making disciples is impossible apart from him. That's why he says, “I'm with you...” For how long? “Even to the end

of the age.” Which implies...he is calling us to make disciples until he comes back.

- “I’m not cut out for this!” Jesus is with you!
- “I don’t feel equipped!” Jesus is with you.
- “Just the thought of talking to someone about the gospel gives me butterflies in my stomach.” I hear you...it can be scary. But don’t forget: JESUS IS WITH YOU!

You have all that you need to obey Jesus’ command to make disciples. If you have Jesus himself, what more do you need?

## **Conclusion**

Give yourself to this. Keep praying that prayer: Open a door, open their heart, open my mouth. Just ask yourself, “How can I get this person’s attention on Jesus?”

*One thing I like to do is ask people what they did over the weekend, because inevitably they ask me the same question, and I tell them, “I went to church.” And when you tell someone in Austin, “I went to church,” they look at you like you’re an alien...which you kind of are!*

*Then I may ask them, “Do you have a church you go to?” And they might say, “I used to when I was little,” or “Nah, I’m not very religious.” And then you can start sharing your own story, “Neither was I. But then learned about who Jesus is, and I couldn’t ignore him. I realized he truly did die on a cross for all my sins and he actually rose from the dead. Have you heard about him before?”*

You’re just trying to point people to Jesus—to a person, the risen Son of God. If you’re here and not yet a Christian, you need get that. To become a Christian is not to become a follower of an abstract set of teachings *merely*. You’re not joining yourself to a random group of people.

You’re trusting a person—trusting that he is who he said he is and he did what he said he did. And then you’re following that person with your life. You’re following Jesus himself. You’re following the Son of God. You’re keeping your eyes on him and saying, “I’ll go where you go! I’ll do what you tell me to do, because I trust you!”

So get to know Jesus because you'll only follow someone you truly trust. And when you start following him, guess what? You better start helping others follow him too.

Kinney, we were put here in this location 88 years ago for a reason. There are scores of lost, broken, rebellious, cold-hearted, dead in their trespasses, wrath-awaiting, hell-bound, lost sinners...who don't know about Christ...all around us! *I think of...*

- *Lenny (at the dog park) whose had serious health problems.*
- *Alexander and his wife (who are expecting their first child).*
- *Sarah, Fern, Carlos over at Super Thai.*
- *James, my neighbor who I played bball.*

Let me encourage you: write down one name of someone you know who doesn't know Christ, and start praying, "Lord, open a door, open their heart, and open my mouth."

Let us do what the risen Son of God told us to do...because he bridged heaven and earth, and he is with us every step of the way.