

The Maker's Method

Matthew 28:16–20

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **Small Groups, Men's and Women's studies, and Youth Group** — fall sign-up;
- **Saint George Institute** pilot year — registration is now open. Orientation is Tuesday, September 8. saintgeorgeinstitute.com

ALL THINGS NEW

- I started out this summer series that we have titled **All Things New** challenging us to ponder the reality that God is not just planning a new creation — He is making one, right now, in the present tense. "Behold, I am **making** all things new."
- **That raises an honest question:** if the Maker is at work, how does He actually do His work? Not in the abstract — in this room, this morning, in Sandpoint.
- The answer Scripture gives isn't flashy but ordinary and from the ground up: **He does it through people who make disciples of other people.**
- That is also our answer, as a church, to the question "why do we exist?" Our mission, in one sentence:

Making disciples of Jesus, who live all of life for the Glory of God.

- For the next two weeks I want to unpack that sentence, half at a time. If you're new here, consider this your introduction to us — not as a slogan, but the reason North Summit Church exists.
- Today, the first half: **making disciples of Jesus.**
- And if you're new, or you've been burned by a church before, or you're still deciding whether any of this is really for you — good. Stay.
- The men on the mountain in our text this morning were not a group that any one would have expected to change the world: fishermen, a former tax collector, they still had their doubts standing right there in front of Jesus. Life in Christ has never required you to have it figured out before you start following.
- Jesus told them all "Follow me...and I will make you. The key isn't in having all the answers. It's simply in following the Master.

INTRODUCTION

- Every departing leader leaves something behind — instructions, a will, a final word that carries more weight than anything said before, because it's the last thing said.
- Jesus's last recorded words to His followers before He ascends are not a theology lecture. They're an assignment.

Matthew 28:16–20 NASB

"Now the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped 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, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

- Notice verse 17 before we go any further: **"they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful."** The Great Commission was given to a group that still had doubt in it. Whatever hesitation you're carrying this morning, you're in good company. Jesus gives the assignment anyway.
- Notice, too, where this happens: "the mountain which Jesus had designated." Matthew doesn't name it, but he's already trained us to notice mountains in this Gospel — the mountain of temptation, the mountain of the Beatitudes, the mountain of transfiguration. Something important in Matthew tends to happen on a mountain. This is the last one, and it's where the whole book ends.
- Three things this morning from this text: **the command, the method, and the moment.**

1. THE COMMAND: AN ASSIGNMENT ROOTED IN AUTHORITY

- "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Before Jesus says one word about what they should do, He tells them why they can do it.
- This isn't self-help advice from a good teacher. It's a command issued by the risen King of the universe — authority in heaven, over every spiritual power, and on earth, over every human structure.
- Because of that authority: "Go, therefore, and make disciples." The word **therefore** is load-bearing. The mission is grounded in who Jesus is, not in our competence.
- Look closely at the grammar for a moment, because it changes how you hear the verse: the only command — the only imperative verb — in this whole sentence is **make disciples**. "Going," "baptizing," and "teaching" are all participles describing how the making happens. Jesus didn't say, "go, and while you're at it, make some disciples if you have time." Disciple-making is the main verb. Everything else serves it.
- And notice what He didn't say: make converts. Make attenders. Make fans. He said **make disciples** — from the Greek word for an apprentice, someone who doesn't just believe what the teacher believes but takes on the whole shape of the teacher's life.
- Notice the scope, too: "all the nations." It's tempting to hear that as a call to somewhere far away — and it is that.
- But it's also a call to right here. Sandpoint has its own nations inside it now: longtime North Idaho families, political refugees escaping the coast, retirees from other states, seasonal workers, young families looking for something slower.

- "All the nations" starts on our own streets before it ever gets to a plane ticket. In fact, here in Northern Idaho we are literally on the "edges of the earth" from where Christ commissioned His disciples.
- A few weeks ago we looked at Ephesians 1 and heard that Christ is bringing all things together under His headship. That's the same authority at work here. It isn't abstract. It's what makes this command possible in the first place.
- Think about how commissions normally work. A general gives an order and stays behind a desk. A king sends an ambassador and remains on his own throne, in his own country.
- What Jesus does here is different on both counts — He holds *all* authority, not a delegated slice of it, and, as we'll see in a moment, He doesn't stay behind. He goes with the ones He sends.
- This isn't the first time God has commissioned someone this way. Right before Joshua leads Israel into a land full of giants and walled cities, God tells him the same thing three times in one chapter:

"Be strong and courageous... for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

(Joshua 1)

- A big assignment, paired with God's ongoing presence. Matthew 28 is the New Testament version of the same pattern — an impossible-sounding task, backed by a promise that makes it possible.
- Here is the first thing I want us to understand: **disciple-making is not one ministry among many at North Summit Church. It is the whole assignment.**
- Everything else we do — the worship gathering, the classes, the small groups and Bible studies — exists to serve this one command.
- So what does it look like to actually treat it that way, instead of as one item on a long list?
 - It means we evaluate every ministry in this church by one question: is this helping form apprentices of Jesus, or just filling a calendar?
 - It means you evaluate your own week the same way: not "did I go to church," but "am I closer to someone who is helping me follow Jesus, and closer to someone I'm helping follow Him?"
 - It means we stop treating spiritual growth as something that happens to you passively, and start treating it as something that happens through relationship, on purpose, over time.
- It's also worth calling out the temptation here, because it's an easy one in our culture: you can listen to sermons, read good books, and follow solid teachers online for years, and mistake all of that consumption for discipleship.
- **Content can inform you. It cannot know your name, notice when you're struggling, or ask you a hard follow-up question.** Only a person can do that. That's exactly why the command is "make disciples," not "distribute information."

2. THE METHOD: FORMED, NOT INFORMED

- "...teaching them to follow all that I commanded you." Not teaching them to *know everything* I commanded you. Teaching them to *follow* it.
- This is so important — because it's possible to master a lot of biblical information and still not be a disciple.
- **Information is not formation.**
- In first-century Judaism, a young man who wanted to become a rabbi's disciple didn't sign up for a class. He left home and followed that rabbi everywhere — watched him eat, watched him pray, watched how he treated people who couldn't do anything for him.
- There's a saying that grew out of that world: "**May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.**" That's the picture behind the word Jesus uses in Matthew 28. Discipleship was never a seminar. It was proximity, in the messiness of daily life. It is something that is far more caught than taught.
- Duet. 6 is a great example of this.
- Paul describes this same process to Timothy — and shows us exactly where it's headed:

2 Timothy 2:2 NASB

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful people who will be able to teach others also."

- Count the generations in that one verse: Paul, to Timothy, to faithful people, who teach others also. That's four generations of disciple-making compressed into a single sentence. **Discipleship was never meant to stop with you. It was designed to multiply.**
- This is also not a modern invention. Some of the earliest Christian communities took new believers through years — not weeks — of structured formation before or after their baptism: shaping what they believed, how they lived, and how they worshiped, together, before ever sending them out.
- Paul even has a word for this kind of whole-person training: **paideia** — used in Ephesians 6:4 for how a parent raises a child "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Mind, character, and practice, formed over time, on purpose.
- Picture it in ordinary life:
 - A retired contractor teaching a younger guy on the crew not just how to frame a wall, but how to handle a client who's lying to him.
 - A mom or dad two kids further down the road than you are, answering your eleven-o'clock-at-night text without making you feel like a failure.
 - That's disciple-making. It rarely looks like a classroom. It almost always looks like someone letting you close enough to watch.
- That's the method. Not a lecture. Not a decision card. A slow, deliberate, whole-life apprenticeship that reproduces itself in someone else.

3. THE MOMENT: WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE HERE, NOW

- This charge isn't new to us either. In 1909, a small group of believers gathered above a meat market in downtown Sandpoint — in a rough logging town people back then actually called "Hangtown" — around this same call: make disciples of Jesus. That gathering became this church.
- For over a hundred years, in a few different buildings and under a couple of different names, this has been the one continuous thread. We haven't been asked to invent a new mission. We've been asked to carry an old one faithfully into a new season.
- So here is the question our team has been sitting with this year: given everything we just read — that Jesus commanded teaching people to *follow*, not just to know, and that Paul modeled multiplying disciples across generations — what does obedience to that actually look like in this room, in this season?
- The answer was never going to be a single program. Method matters as much as the mission itself — Jesus didn't design disciple-making to happen only from a stage on a Sunday morning. He designed it for ordinary proximity: shared meals, homes, long conversations, watching someone handle a hard week up close. So the real question isn't "what's the new thing," it's "where are the rooms — plural — where that kind of proximity can actually happen?"
- At North Summit, that's a handful of ordinary environments, each doing its part of the same job:
 - **Sunday mornings** — where the whole church family gathers, hears the Word taught, and remembers together what's true.
 - **Small Groups** — where discipleship gets a name and a phone number. A handful of people meeting regularly, praying for each other by name, and asking hard questions in a room small enough to be known.
 - **Men's and Women's studies** — gender-specific spaces for the kind of honesty and accountability that's harder to find anywhere else, where older believers pass on what they've learned to younger ones, up close.
 - **Youth Group** — because generational faithfulness can't skip a generation. Our students need their own apprenticeship in following Jesus, every kid needs another voice in their life that is saying the same thing as their parents.
 - **Saint George Institute** — our newest room, a focused, one-year track of Christian paideia for those who want to go deeper still.
- None of these compete with each other. They're not five different missions. They're five rooms in the same house, each suited to a different kind of formation. You don't need all five to be a disciple. You do need at least one.
- Let's get specific, because "get discipled" can sound vague until you picture your actual week:
 - If you're new to town and still learning names, a **Small Group** is probably your front door — the fastest way to go from knowing people to being known by them.
 - If you're a dad who wants other men speaking into your marriage and your work, get in a **Men's study**. Iron sharpens iron; it doesn't sharpen itself.
 - If you're a mom in the thick of raising young kids, a **Women's study** will hand you both theology and a table of women who've been exactly where you are.

- If you have a student in middle or high school, get them connected to **Youth Group** — where they can have other adults and other kids their age that will encourage them to grow in Christ-likeness.
- And if you're the kind who wants to know the *why* underneath the *what*, and you can commit a Tuesday night this fall, **Saint George Institute** is built for you.
- Practically: that might mean a conversation with Pastor Eric or a group leader today, an email to the church office this week, or simply telling one person, "I want to be discipled — will you help me find where to start?" It doesn't have to be complicated. It does have to be a next step, not just a good intention.

CONCLUSION

- Let's go back to the last line of the passage: **"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** The command comes with a promise. Jesus doesn't send His apprentices out and step back. He goes with them.
- And remember verse 17 — some in that room worshiped, and some doubted, and Jesus commissioned all of them anyway. You don't need to have this figured out to be part of what He's doing. You just need to take one step.
- Here's what I want you to leave with: every person in this room is somewhere on this journey right now. You are either being made into a disciple, or you are making one, or maybe both. There is no neutral position.
- So ask yourself honestly this week: **who is investing in me? And who am I investing in?** If the answer to either question is "no one," that's not a small gap. That's the whole assignment sitting unclaimed.
- Some of you already know exactly what I'm describing, because someone did this for you once — showed up, stayed close, let you watch, told you the truth when it cost them something. If that's you, you already know how much it's worth. The only question left is who's waiting for you to do the same for them.
- We said it a few weeks ago: **the Maker is not done. He is working.** And He has chosen — for reasons that are frankly a little humbling — to do that work through ordinary people who make disciples of other ordinary people. And that task of giving as the primary vocation of anyone who bears the name Christian.

[Let's pray]