

We Are All Missionaries

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 all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

These are the final verses in the book of Matthew, the last words recorded from Jesus to his disciples in this book. These words of our Savior have launched more mission trips and evangelistic outreaches around the world than any other verses. These words tell Christians that we are to share our faith with others, and the final verse, verse 20, is a reminder that, while we are doing that, Jesus is with us. Jesus gives us a command, but not without the promise that He will help us to carry out His command.

Today we respond to commands by the rank and stature of the person giving the command. If your sister asks you to do something, then you might comply. However, if your dad asks you to do something, you had better comply. If your boss asks you to do something, then you probably would comply, if even half-heartedly. Conversely, if the CEO of your company called you and asked for something you would definitely make it a priority. This is the same influence that Jesus uses as he makes this command.



Jesus started this dialogue in verse 18 by telling His disciples that He is ruler over all. *“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”* This statement increases the intensity of both the command and the intensity of the

promise. Jesus tells His disciples that He has been given authority over everything – that He has been

given all authority from God. The fact that Jesus has been given supreme authority makes this command more intense as it prompts the recipient to understand that this command from Jesus was not given as if it was from a man, but was given to them (and to us) from the authority of God Himself. Jesus, claiming all of the authority and power of God, tells us to go and make disciples of all nations teaching them to observe Jesus' commands. This command is also followed up with a promise that Jesus, claiming all authority and power of God Himself, will be with us always – as we are doing this command – even to the end of time.

So we know this command is crucial, and from the highest authority, but how do we do it? Does this command, often called the Great Commission, mean that we are all to go overseas and become missionaries? Are we all to leave our jobs, and our families to go into full time Christian ministry? Well, although this verse is the number one verse for launching mission trips, it is not exactly referring to missionaries in the same way that we think of them today. The church today is much different than the church created in the book of Acts. Many of the structures and practices of the church today are not edicts from God or even from the apostles, but are inventions of the church itself. Some of them have made it very difficult for us to understand our place or our position in the church as it relates to commands in the Bible.

In the early church there was no church building, there was no massive steeples with crosses on top of them, no Sunday school, and no children's church. The early church was simply groups of people, families, which met together in one of their houses to worship God and to pray. They did not have great sound systems and the most talented singers, they



did not need men's ministries and woman's ministries, and they did not even take an offering because they shared all that they had. Acts 2:44-47 tells us,

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

They did not have a pastor to tell them a witty sermon each week, but rather each of them likely took part in their gatherings conversing openly about Jesus and His effects on their lives. The apostles preached, not to the "churches" but to the unsaved, often at great expense to themselves. The churches of those days were groups of Christians whose whole lives were changed by Jesus and this showed in everything they did. No one can truly meet Jesus and not have their life changed.

In light of the early church, Jesus' command was best understood. Jesus was telling his disciples, the early church, and us today, that we are to make disciples who follow him. We are to tell others of the gift of eternal life that He has given us. We should also band together as Christians, sharing our lives with each other,

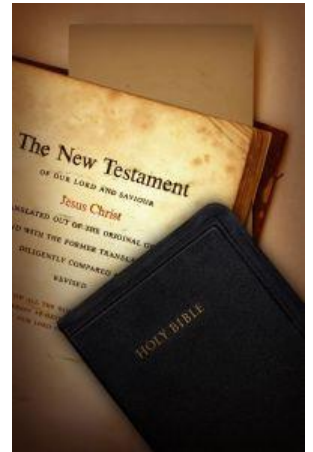


helping other Christians to become disciples of Jesus. The Christian life is not to be a silent life, hidden from the public eye, but a life that shines a bright light into a dark world. Remember Matthew 5:16, "*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" The Christian life is to be a life in

community with other Christians that shows the love of Christ and shows obedience to his commandments. It also is to be a life that attracts others to Christ. In 1 Peter 3:15 we learn that our lives are to so different that

other people ask us why have so much hope. *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”* So we are to live our life in such a way as to prompt others around us to ask, “Why are you different?” This is not because they see or hear of us going to three church services per week, but because they see our light shining differently than others – that they see our faith is real and that we are not simply Christians on Sunday morning.

So let us get back to this last great command from our Savior. Jesus is telling us to spread our faith in Him, to tell others of Him, and to share the great gift that He has given us. Why would we be silent? If we really believe in the power of God to forgive our sins and save us from eternity in Hell, then wouldn't we want to share it? Jesus is telling us that we are to share the Good news of His salvation with everyone we meet, and to teach others to live a life that follows Christ. This command is actually very similar to the first command to Adam and Eve in the garden. God told them in Genesis 1:28 that they were to fill the earth.



Remember that they were created in God's image, so what would they be filling the earth with? God's image.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28

Jesus is telling his disciples again to fill the nations with men and women that love God and are Disciples of Christ. We must spread the Gospel to all nations. Why wouldn't we? God gave us His only son to pay the price for our sins that we could not pay. We deserve death, but God gave us life. He offers this to all who believe. Why wouldn't we tell others? Why wouldn't we live our lives in such a way as to prompt others to see the difference that Jesus makes in our lives? Fill the earth starts with us today. It starts in our homes, in our towns, and in our countries. This command is not for the church, or for the missionaries, but for each of us. It is given from the highest power, and it is addressed to you.



The best part is that Jesus himself promises to walk alongside you as you fulfill this command. Jesus himself will never leave you or forsake you. Jesus himself tells you that, *I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20*

Praise God!

English Standard Version (ESV)

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