

Mark 16 9-20

Matt 28:16-20 (I Cor 15:6-7)

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¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

We have spent a lot of time looking at the gospels. We have had some fun at the expense of the humanity of the disciples. We have gone through the dark times as we have seen **what our sin cost Jesus**. We have seen the wonderful miracles that Christ performed, miracles that give us hope that **what we need in our lives** is never greater than the power of Christ can provide for. We have listened as Christ taught His disciples, the fickle crowds, and even Christ's enemies. We have a very good feel for who Jesus was, what He taught, and what He did.

Now we have a question for this morning. What is it that **He wanted**? What is it that Christ **intended** for all of his followers? When Christ was preparing to leave this earthly existence, what is it that all of His work, and teaching, and sacrifice was supposed to accomplish? What were those who claim to follow Christ, what is it that he wanted them to do and be?

Think about this. You are here at Ferndale Church this morning. You chose to come here for some reasons. (Jack broke down in the parking lot.) You chose to fellowship with this unlikely group of believers for reasons. We have associated ourselves with some reasons. What are they?

There are a lot of people who act like Christ **did what He did** so that we can now have a place where we can go where we are loved. So they evaluate each church they attend based on **how loved they feel**, how well they think their needs are being met. And they come and go accordingly.

There are others how think that what Christ did was to provide us a **place where we can worship God**. That worship and praise, done together, is the purpose for the church. So they evaluate each church they go to based on the quality of their experience of worship toward God. And they come and go accordingly.

Others think that the church is primarily a place where we hear from God. So we look for the church where we can hear the best doctrine, or maybe where we experience the sermons most powerfully. And people come and go accordingly. Isn't it odd that when you are reading scripture, most of the references about the church and our participation in it focus more on **what we are to provide** than **what we are to receive**? Scripture describes the church as a bunch of people seeking to **do what Christ wants done** and to **be what Christ wants them to be**. It prescribes our part in it accordingly.

Now if that is the case, isn't it vitally important that we understand what it is that Christ wants the church to do? What is its purpose? What is its mission statement?

This morning we are going to look at that.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

Now remember that the 7 fishing disciples had gone fishing. Christ gave them a course adjustment and a nice meal by the sea. He restored Peter to leadership. Matthew skips that story and jumps right into the fact that the disciples went from Jerusalem to Galilee to the mountain Jesus had told them to go to.

We learn in I Corinthians that there was a group at one point of 500 disciples who saw Jesus at the same time. It could be that the ones who doubted were in this group. Because by now it seems that the eleven were convinced that Christ had risen from the dead.

So when the eleven, and possibly more, saw Christ, they worshipped Christ. Again notice that Christ did not reject any of their worship. This again is an affirmation of the deity of Christ.

At this point, just to have the proper perspective, let's take a look at what Paul told us of this same event.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some

have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Paul is telling us that at some point at least, probably the point in our text, there were 500 people watching on. This was a very big deal.

¹⁸ **And Jesus came and spoke to them**

The doubters probably needed some assurance. So Jesus came closer to them and began speaking. This probably removed all the doubt they were experiencing. They knew the authority of Jesus's preaching when they heard it. Now, what did Christ say? This is so vitally important. What did Christ want the church to hear prior to His ascension?

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Jesus is saying that He has absolute authority to say what He is saying. This authority is unlimited. He has all authority. He can say and do whatever He wills and it will carry authority. God will stand behind it.

This would have been a huge statement to those who were listening. Christ was essentially saying that He had as much authority over his followers lives as **all the scriptures that had been given previously** and **all the scriptures that would come later**. He was essentially saying that **"what I say God backs"**. He is saying I am speaking to you what God wants done. These followers would have understood this. It would have gotten their attention. They would have understood the need to say, Yes Lord and Master.

While this truth can be very assuring if we are submitting to the Lordship of Christ, it should be extremely frightening if we are resisting it in any way. We need to understand that if we are committing sin against what we know scripture says, we are **standing against** the authority of Jesus Christ. We are resisting it. We may even be **rebellious** against it. That is a huge deal.

So, given that Christ has all the authority of God behind what He is going to say next, what He is going to say next better be **gripped by our souls in a death grip**. We had better understand just how very important the next thing Christ will say is.

¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.**

Now, it is very helpful to understand the sentences here. Make disciples is the main verb and the central command in this passage. Going and Baptizing and Teaching are supporting activities. But they are not the main command. The word used for make disciples is making people who will place their trust in Christ and follow Him continually in learning and obedience.

There are a lot of organizations that want to justify their existence by counting the number of people who pray a prescribed prayer. But that is not what this is talking about. What this is describing is a person who has been gripped by Christ in such a way that their lives are now directed in a completely different direction than they had been.

I like a quote from John MacArthur here. He says,

Scripture knows nothing of receiving Christ as Savior but not as Lord, as if a person could take God piecemeal as it suits him. Every convert to Christ is a disciple of Christ, and no one who is not a disciple of Christ, no matter what his profession of faith might be, is a convert of Christ.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 24-28.

Sometimes this understanding and submitting to the Lordship of Christ is a process, not an event. A person may pray a prayer to receive Christ but it may take years before they understand what it is to truly be a Christian. But if God is at work in that person, they will come to that point of submission to Christ's Lordship. They **will** become a disciple.

In our evangelism, we cannot be satisfied with a person's salvation until we see that the person will submit willingly to Christ's demands upon their lives. They will not do it perfectly, but that person must submit the handling of **their fears, their loves, their sexuality, their money, their time**, over to the clearly revealed will of Christ. Until that happens we have no assurance of that person's salvation and we should not **offer assurance** of salvation to that person. A believer is a person who is in that struggle daily, not always winning, but always fighting. So, this does not mean that a disciple won't fail at points, but at those points, when they realize they have failed, they will be repentant, not rebellious. They will confess their sin, not excuse it. And they will not be able to live without God's forgiveness of that sin so that their fellowship is restored. Because that fellowship with God is the lifeblood of a disciple of Christ.

So making disciples is what the church is to be about. That is the focus of the command that Christ gave. We here at Ferndale Church are to make it our primary mission to be a disciple and to make disciples. That is why we exist. Think about what you know of the Bible. What is the whole Bible really about? It is the record of mankind rebelling against God and God pursuing mankind to reconcile them to Himself. That is the core of what God does on this planet. I want to borrow from MacArthur again.

The great mission of the church is to so love, learn, and live as to call men and women to Jesus Christ. As sinners are forgiven and are transformed from death to life and from darkness to light, God is glorified through that gracious miracle.

The glory of God is manifest in His loving provision to redeem lost men. He Himself paid the ultimate price to fulfill His glory.

Therefore the believer who desires to glorify God, who wants to honor God's supreme will and purpose, must share God's love for the lost world and share in His mission to redeem the lost to Himself. Christ came into the world that He loved and sought to win sinners to Himself for the Father's glory. As Christ's representatives, we are likewise sent into the world that He loves to bring the lost to Him and thereby bring glory and honor to God. Our mission is the same mission as that of the Father and of the Son.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 24-28.

If God's primary purpose for the saved were loving fellowship, He would take believers immediately to heaven, where spiritual fellowship is perfect, unhindered by sin, disharmony, or loneliness. If His primary purpose for the saved were the learning of His Word, He would also take believers immediately to heaven, where His Word is perfectly known and understood. And if God's primary purpose for the saved were to give Him praise, He would, again, take believers immediately to heaven, where praise is perfect and unending.

There is only one reason the Lord allows His church to remain on earth: to seek and to save the lost, just as Christ's only reason for coming to earth was to seek and to save the lost. "As the Father has sent Me," He declared, "I also send you" ([John 20:21](#)). Therefore, a believer who is not committed to winning the lost for Jesus Christ should reexamine his relationship to the Lord and certainly his divine reason for existence.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 24-28.

I would add a caveat to what Mr. MacArthur says here. Part of discipleship, part of making disciples is to train and encourage that which is Godly behavior and to discourage and rebuke sinful behavior. That is often done inside the body of Christ and it has its place in the proper mission of the church. **Evangelism and discipleship** are covered in Christ's command in our text, not just evangelism. We are to make disciples of ourselves, of each other, and of those who respond to the gospel of Christ in the world. All of that is part of the mission.

So back to our text.

¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

The Go therefore in our text is not the primary emphasis of the text. In fact, it isn't really an imperative, a command. It could easily be translated, "having gone". Or some understand it as "as you are going".

I am in the world every week day. I don't need **to go**. **I am going**. Many of you are too. And while we are there we are absorbed with lots of things. Our greatest problem in that arena, at least my greatest problem, is that I lose my perspective and become focused on everything **but** the most important reason I am there. I want to be seen as someone who is funny, someone who is competent, someone who is valuable. But I forget that the most important thing I can be is someone who is **useful in helping people get to God**.

Do you find yourself in that same spot? Many of us are already going. Maybe for some of you who are more secluded it will take an intentional effort to find yourself surrounded by those who don't know Christ. But most of us are already going.

Now who is our target group? Well, it would seem by Christ saying "of all nations" that we don't need to discriminate at all about who we present the gospel to. If they are breathing, they are a candidate to hear the Gospel. I would think this would be enough to end any ideas of one race being more important than any other. There is a great equity in God's approach toward humanity. Everyone is explicitly a target for the gospel of Christ. None are more important than any other. All nations pretty well puts everything in perspective. Those in the past who have tried to make distinctions about how God regards races needs to look at the mission of the church laid out by Christ. We are to reach all nations. Now for us, this is probably much easier than the people in Christ's audience on this day. They were primarily Jewish followers. When Christ said that this mission is to be carried out on all nations, they would immediately come up with a thousand "buts". But Christ was clear. All nations. And Peter would soon have to lead the pack in doing business with this.

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

To baptize means to immerse in water. That is why we fully immerse a person when we baptize him or her.

We see here that the first thing mentioned about what must be done with a disciple is to baptize them. This act does not save a person, but it is an outward action that displays an internal change. In many countries, this single act will bring upon one's self a death sentence if it is found out. Baptism declares ones identity to be tied with Christ.

Romans 6:3-4

³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism

into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

When a believer is immersed in water, that symbolizes their death to themselves and their sin in Christ. When we come out of the water that symbolizes our raising from the death of our previous condition. We now have a new life in a new power. We are no longer held captive under the power of sin, but we have risen to be under the power of Christ. He have power over sin, power over death. So when we baptize a person, what we are saying is that this person wants to go through the external ceremony that represents an internal reality. We are saying that this person is truly a born again follower of Jesus Christ. And that is a huge deal.

teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you

There are a lot of people who would think that they really couldn't disciple someone. But there is something very beautiful about what Christ says here. There are really only two things you need to know to be a discipler. First you must understand that **what Christ commands** truly is the guide to how the Christian should live. Our marching orders do not come from the Christian community or the impulses of our hearts or our vivid imaginations or the morays of our society. They come from the words of Christ, and by extension, the rest of scripture.

The second thing that is needed to be a discipler is that you are obeying the things that Christ commanded.

At this point we need to get both applications.

We will focus on the negative side of this to begin with.

First, if you **don't understand or accept** that what scriptures clearly say are the guide for all of life, you are not fit to be in any form of leadership in the body of Christ. You need to **be disciplined**. You should not be **trying to disciple**. A discipler must accept that life is to be lived according to the clear revelation of scripture. Far too many people are trusted with positions of leadership because they have characteristics that will draw people's attention, but they have no idea what Christ commands. And even if they know what God says, they don't see how important it is to **submit** to Christ's commands. The churches and ministries appoint these people at the peril of the mission of the church and at the risk of the salvation of the appointees. Any leader in any kind of mission must understand the authority of Christ to command all of life. They need to understand what the scripture commands. They need to be able to convey that in a clear and compelling fashion. And they need to display obedience to Christ in their lives, particularly in the areas their flesh strongly wants something else. The second problem in those who are discipling is hypocrisy. If a person is to disciple another believer, they must be a disciple themselves. If I tell you how to

deal with an issue where your strong impulses and desires conflict with the clear word of God, but I deal with my strong impulses and desires in a completely different fashion, I am not fit to disciple you. I need disciplined myself.

If we ever wonder why those closest to us do not seem to heed our words, we would do well to see how well we heed them ourselves. Hypocrisy rarely inspires people to **follow our words**. It usually inspires people to **follow our example**. If we respond to strong impulses and desires by giving into them, we are teaching those around us that we have a powerless Christianity. And the worst thing they can do is to emulate us. Yet that is normally what they will do, no matter how pious our speeches are. This isn't difficult to figure. What do we do in the face of strong emotions, strong compulsions? What do we do? That is the kind of Christianity we are portraying to others. And don't ever think people won't notice. They will.

Now the positive side. Those people who are fit to disciple, who are fit for the ministry of the church, really only need to know two things.

First, what did Christ and the rest of scriptures say? And second, how am I obeying it. Because, in reality, discipleship is ultimately teaching other believers to obey the same way I obey. There is nothing more powerful than the ministry of a believer who obeys God when everything in him or her wants to do otherwise. These people are the best disciplers. Because they understand obedience. They know what it is to obey. They understand the cost. They understand the opposition. And they can convey that the power of God truly does provide everything needed for life and godliness.

People who live in failure, who live in disobedience, who don't really consider what it is that God has commanded, who have accepted that way of life, will not have very fruitful ministries. But when they surrender to the Lordship of Christ, when they say yes to Christ instead of flesh, they will soon begin to understand what the Christian life is all about. They will soon begin to see their points of failure turn into obvious obediences. They no longer give in to the temptations they used to succumb to. And they will soon begin to have an effective ministry in discipling others.

Discipling others is not complicated. We are simply telling people how to say yes to God the same way we are saying yes to God. We only have to know what Christ says and how it is that we are obeying what God says. It isn't complicated. A person doesn't need a PHD in theology. We only need an HIS degree in obedience.

Christ said this.

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's

who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. ([John 14:23-26](#))

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Back to our text-

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Lo is usually a word used to call attention to something of special importance. It is almost like Christ is saying, and by the way, it is essential that you remember this point. While you are doing what I told you to do, while you are obeying me and submitting to me, I myself am with you.

I wish we all believed this this morning. I wish I really believed it. Do you realize the significance of this? How would we live if we really believed that Christ was with us always? We started 2017 with this challenge, to act as if Christ is always with us. I hope by now we have seen how we really have difficulty living this way. We so often behave in a manner that displays that we really don't think that Christ is with us. But His word here tells us that He truly is.

And why is Christ with us? To empower us to carry out His will. To accomplish the salvation of all people groups. To see to it that those **who are His** hear the gospel and respond in a way that they are **taught to obey Christ** like **other fellow believers follow Christ**.

If you are here this morning and you are understanding this for the first time, it is important that you don't let this insight pass. Move on it. Receive what Christ did on the cross to count for you. Receive the forgiveness of your sins through the death of Christ. Receive new power to live life through His resurrection. And surrender your life to Lord and Master Jesus Christ this morning. That is where spiritual life starts.

As for those of us who know Christ and obey Christ, how would our workplaces and offices and homes be different if Christ were there instead of us? What would He be focusing on? He was pretty clear about what is important to Him this morning. He wants people to be formed into true disciples. He wants that for every believer here inside the church. That is what the ministry of the body is to accomplish. And He wants us to present His message to those we meet in the world so that they too have this wonderful opportunity. A good application for this week would be, what changes can we make- clear plans, not just intentions, that would make us more effective in carrying out Christ's mission both inside and outside of the church?