

Where Do We Go From Here?

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Matthew

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I'll tell you, this is the first passage that I ever memorized as a Christian. Though I have been a Christian now for 20 years, which is unreal to me, by the way, thank you for the kind birthday wishes from everyone in here, this is 20 years of being a Christian and this was the first passage I ever memorized. This is something that has grown to be very near and dear to my heart, has weighed very heavy on my heart many days, but one that has pushed me to pastoral ministry, to serving in ministry, to going on the mission field from time to time, to wanting to talk about the gospel with every single one of my coworkers at Target, at Kohl's, at Dick's Sporting Goods, often to their annoyance, but this is quite possibly one of the greatest passages in all of the Bible. In my opinion, probably the greatest passage is the one that we heard last week on Romans 3, as it is the full presentation of the problem of sin but the glorious truth of the gospel. But it forces us to ask a lot of questions.

I want to extend, before we begin, a special thank you to a lot of people. I want to thank Trevor and Neil for being willing to serve by leading us in worship multiple times over the last few months. I want to thank all of the elders here who serve faithfully as our pastor has been on sabbatical, which by the way, he will be back next week, Lord willing, and I'm very much looking forward to sitting under his preaching again. I want to thank Todd Friel, Ken Temple for preaching the word, Scott Rouse, Denver Clark, God has blessed our church tremendously with men that love the Lord, that serve the Lord and are faithful to his word. Scott, even this morning, taught on thankfulness which, by the way, he didn't know he was teaching until two days ago. So I'm very thankful that God has blessed our church with mighty men of the faith, mighty men of the word that are willing to step in in a moment's notice to serve you.

Let's look at our text this morning. We'll start in verse 16.

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have

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

Let's pray.

Our most gracious and heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, we thank you that you have not left us to try and figure out this life on our own but that you have revealed yourself, revealed yourself to us in your word, you've allowed us to know you in a personal way. We thank you for Christ who came to purchase of people for himself that the unrighteous might take on his righteousness. God, this morning we are coming face to face with a very hard question: where do we go now? Where do we go from here, O Lord? I pray that we would wrestle through the implications of this text and what it means for each one of us in this room. I pray that you would burden us with a desire to see your gospel spread throughout every corner of the globe. And I pray that you would allow us to see that every Christian is a disciple-maker for the glory of your name and the expansion of your kingdom. Help me, Lord, as I am worn down and tired and help us to see your truth this morning. We ask all of this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'm going to make a confession to start out, the confession is I stopped watching the news. I know that's a weird confession but let me explain. I stopped watching the news about a year ago because it was just depressing to see. We have our own country arguing over politics and beliefs, we have wars over different ideologies, but there's also disasters, famines across the world, heart-brokenness, murders, deaths, and I just got tired of watching it to be perfectly honest. For me it was very heavy. I didn't want to see it and if I'm honest here's the real confession: I grew numb to it. I grew numb to the pain of the world around us and my fear is that we as a church, specifically the church in America, have grown numb to the pain of this world. I had a conversation with James at the beginning of the week about this sermon and the first word that I used was indifferent, and he helped me to see that it's not necessarily indifference because indifference is looking and saying I don't care, numbness is seeing so much pain and sometimes hiding it away to which we don't feel it anymore.

I'm afraid we have grown numb to the problems of the world, but I was reminded of that a lot this morning. I was reminded of it a lot this week. My heart had grown calloused and yet the Lord did some open-heart surgery on me at the very beginning of the week. For those of you that don't know, my car broke down. I'm not really worried about that anymore. God has provided every single moment along the way. But on Monday I called my father for a little guidance on how to how to sell the thing because there was no fixing it, the entire subframe was shot and there was a lot of money that I did not have that needed to go into it, it was not worth it. So I called him and was asking about titles and all of that fun stuff, and he said, "Hold on just a second. I need to plug my phone in." Well, where in the world are you? He was in Eastern Kentucky. If you've been watching the news, there is a lot of hardships in Eastern Kentucky. I'm actually from, I say I'm from Georgia because I want to claim it but let's be honest, I spent most of my life in Kentucky. I am from the very edge of the Appalachian Mountains. Somerset,

KY. If you only go about 30 minutes to the east, you're there, you're right in Eastern Kentucky. Our family has done a lot of missions and engagement there. I know it seems weird to say missions in Eastern Kentucky, but if you've ever been there, you know that it's almost a third world country. Poverty is ridiculous. There are households in Eastern Kentucky today that do not have running water. Now this was before the floods actually started. Did not have running water or electricity in our country. It is as if it is a third world country there. But if you've been watching the news and I decided to turn on the news this week after this conversation, he said, "Son, you don't understand what is happening in Eastern Kentucky. If you've been keeping up with it, there has been a lot of rain in the last few weeks that have caused severe flooding." If you know the geography of Eastern Kentucky, you'll hear a word holler and holler is a real thing. We kind of laugh at it when we hear someone say holler, but it's a real thing. If you've been there. You understand and you know. They're not really mountains, they're hills, but they're steep hills that go straight down into a valley so all of the rainwater flushes down into the valley and it has not stopped raining for weeks on end. The valleys have flooded.

Now I've been there probably close to hundreds of times whether I'm driving around close to our house or getting involved with the community there through outreach evangelism efforts. We have partnered with churches to do Vacation Bible schools, to do sports camps. We partnered with churches to teach archery because that was a door for us to get the gospel in. We've helped churches that have been destroyed by tornadoes and all sorts of other difficulties, but we've never seen anything like this. Entire homes are being ripped apart. There was a story that my dad told, and this is a hard story and I hope to get through it. There's a family that lived in a trailer, husband and wife and four kids. As the floodwaters were coming up, they were trying to grab onto anything they could in the house before they got out. All they could find were some HDMI cords, so they tied them together and tied the kids together so in case the floodwaters rose too high, they would be able to keep all of the kids connected. As the waters continued to rise, they got on top of the roof and they felt safe and secure there until the waters hit another trailer dislodging it from the ground, pushing it down the river and hitting their mobile home. Everyone fell off and a day later they found the kids still tied together dead. There are 37 that have been found dead in Eastern Kentucky. There is still several that are missing. Right now they're dealing with extreme heat and there's more rain on the way. This is one of many stories. My sister called me and said she has a friend that lives on top of one of the hills and all night all they hear is people screaming for help.

So I did a deep dive into the things that are going on in our world right now because I turned off the news because I had grown numb and I needed the Lord to humble me a bit. And I ran. There's been flooding and landslides that have left 70 people dead with at least 45 more missing. In Uganda there is an estimated 24 people that have been killed by flash floods, with thousands being displaced from their homes. In California, there were two people that were burned alive in their car as they were trapped by wildfires. In the Philippines, there were at least four people that were killed and dozens were injured by a 7 magnitude earthquake. This is in the last week. One week And it's hard to read about these things, but that's not the only thing that's going on. Poverty around the world. There are nearly 2 billion people, and if you did the math, that's 26.2% of the world's

population that live on less than \$3.20 a day. A day. And I guarantee a lot of you spent more than that on your coffee this morning. As of 2019, there were an estimated 9.2% of the world, roughly 689 million people that live on extreme poverty living off of less than \$1.90 a day. We spent that in gas just to get here. Millions of children die every single year from malnourishment.

At this point I had to stop. I had to stop looking possibly because I couldn't handle anymore. I haven't quite wept like I have wept this week in a long time. But that is not the greatest problem there is. That is a big problem, a massive problem that the church needs to be a part of fixing, but that is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is lostness, that there are over 3 billion people today considered unreached with the gospel. You can ask Bobby Spivey this number, every day 157,692 people die without the gospel. That is not every year. That is not every month. That is every day. The rough math is a little over 100 people have just died in the last minute without the knowledge of the gospel.

We've grown numb. We have grown numb to the needs of the world. I haven't really mentioned that much either. Ukraine's been in the middle of an awful war for the last few months. There's all sorts of other tragedies that are going on, persecutions around the world, people dying because they even said the word Jesus. They said his name and they were killed. People starving to death. People that can't find running water. We've grown numb. Numb to the pain around us. Numb to the needs of the world around us. And numb to the needs of the gospel around us. I don't know why that is. I can answer for myself. I've grown to enjoy a home with air conditioning that's comfortable, grown to enjoy a car. Lord took it away and yet a family member provided another one, so I really didn't miss a beat. I've grown to enjoy a comfortable office. I've grown to enjoy the books that are on that wall as if they were a treasure that I had won. I've grown numb and we've grown numb.

So this morning I want us to rip off the calluses from our hearts because last week we heard a very powerful sermon. We heard a sermon that placed before us the issue of sin, that there is none that is righteous, that our sin leads straight to death, and there is nothing that we in and of ourselves can do about it. No sinner will ever be able to save themselves. But now one of the greatest phrases in all the Bible, "But now" the sinner has been saved by God, and if this message is true for us this morning, we cannot, we cannot keep it to ourselves. We must proclaim it to the ends of the earth.

The Great Commission is not merely a missional passage. I know I talk about missions all the time. It's one of the great loves of my heart though even that I've grown callous to. This is not merely a missional passage, this is not merely a passage on evangelism. The Great Commission is a mandate for every believer, in every place, in every season of life. Every believer, in every place and every season of life. There is no Christian that gets a hall pass on discipleship. This is not an optional concept for us. This is a wartime command for Christians to make disciples. The needs of the world are massive. When we look at the famines, the natural disasters, we should be running to the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, lovingly serving them, and yet that is not the greatest thing and the greatest need that the world has. Disaster relief is important, food is important, running

water is important, but that is not the greatest need that we can give, that we bring. The greatest need for every person on the face of this earth is the true gospel of Jesus Christ alone.

So will we, will we, the church, embrace our wartime call to make disciples? Many Christians treat the church as if it was a luxury cruise liner. I've heard this from several preachers, that we look at life as if we were on a cruise ship, that people are here to serve us. We sit out by the pool, we drink our tea, we enjoy our time in the sun and we are just comfortably taking our time to get to eternity. That is not what the Bible describes. We are not on a cruise ship. We are on a warship. We are at war with the issues of the world, with the problem of sin. We are fighting the greatest battle that has ever been known but we do so with the truth that the war has already been won. We go to battle knowing that Christ has won the war, so we have to ask the question: where do we go from here? Having heard and seen everything that we have heard and seen this summer through the preaching of the word, specifically on Romans 3 last week, where do we go from here? After having several events on Wednesday nights looking at evangelism and missions, where do we go from here? I don't have an answer for everyone in this room. I just want you to ask the question. After our second missions night this summer, I had several text messages from people asking the question what does this mean for me and my family? I don't know. But that's the right question to ask. So ask the question: for me and for my family, where do we go from here and I hope the text points us to that answer.

Let's lay a bit of context before we get into it. Leading up to this point, what has happened in the book of Matthew? Just in the immediate context, you have Jesus has been arrested in front of his disciples. He's been arrested. He's been beaten. He's been mocked. He's been put on trial multiple times still pressing forward to Calvary, still pressing forward to the cross. At the cross, he is nailed there. What most people don't know, what no one really knows is that he is taking on the sins of the world for us. And he dies. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of his disciples for a minute. The man that they have followed for many years, a man that had called them in some pretty unique ways, that has been teaching them constantly, they've been around constantly, has done some incredible things, has taught on some mind-blowing things, is now dead and they responded by running and hiding. They ran and they hid. At the end of the book of Luke, you find them in a house with the door locked for fear. They're afraid that what has happened to their Jesus is now about to happen to them. So they're hiding. Up until this point, there's still no real clear answer as to what's about to happen, but their question was not where do we go from here, their question was what should we do now? Their Lord is gone. He is in the tomb. He said that he would raise from the dead, but up to this point, he's still in the tomb. What should we do now? But then the glorious resurrection occurs.

Let's back up just a few verses to the very beginning of chapter 28 and see this very thing unfold. Verse 1,

1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from

heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

Now, if you fast forward to verse 16,

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

There was some doubt at play here, specifically for Thomas, as we find out in the gospel of Luke, I believe. He was dead. He was in the tomb. They're fearful. They're asking the question what should we do now? They're waiting to figure out what the answer to that question is, and then Jesus rises from the dead overcoming sin and death itself. Thomas doubted until he was able to lay his hands into the wounds and then Jesus says, "Well, did you believe because you have felt the wounds? Blessed are those who believe without sight, who have faith without sight." But they experienced the resurrected Jesus and it is our experience with the resurrected Jesus that helps us answer the question where do we go from here?

Where do we go from here? The first thing that we see in this passage as to where we go from here is, first of all, submission to Jesus. In order to answer the question where do we go from here, we must submit to Jesus. Verse 18.

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

All authority. Authority is a significant thing in the book of Matthew. Over and over again authority is being questioned. Who has given you this authority? People are enamored by the authority that he speaks with.

Let's look at a few of those instances. Turn to Matthew 7 really quick. Matthew 7:28, this is at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has been teaching for what we have collected of three chapters of just incredible teaching that is really flipping the audience's heads and their beliefs upside down. But in verse 28 after he finishes the Sermon on the Mount it says, "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."

They've been blown away by what they have just heard. He's not teaching like someone that just knows his stuff, he's teaching as if he is the Lord himself. The authority that they're enamored with is the fact that he is speaking as if he were God himself who had handed down the law.

Flip over one more chapter, verse 27 of chapter 8. Jesus has just calmed a storm and it says, "And the men marveled, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?'" Again, they're trying to figure out the authority in which he's doing these things. He's teaching authoritatively. He's calming nature authoritatively.

Go again, another chapter, verse 8 of chapter 9. Jesus has just healed a paralytic, "When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men." Again, authority. There are claims of authority being made here. He is claiming divine authority. He is claiming authority over nature. He's claiming authority over diseases.

Chapter 14 verse 33. I promise we're not going to be doing as much flipping in the back end of this. Chapter 14, verse 33. Jesus has just walked on water. The disciples have seen this amazing thing and it says, "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'" Now that's an authority claim right there. You are the Son of God. After seeing him walk on water, they know what authority he is.

Chapter 21, verse 23. In this passage, his authority is challenged, "And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' Jesus answered them, 'I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?' And they discussed it among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From man," we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.' So they answered," very cleverly, "'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'" They're trying to put into the test. "Whose authority are you saying these things? Whose authority are you doing these things?" And in that moment, he does not have to answer them because in just a few short chapters he's about to show it, that his authority comes from the fact that he is the divine Son of God who overcomes sin and death.

Last passage on his authority. Look at chapter 26, verse 62. This is after Jesus has been betrayed and arrested. He is before Caiaphas and the council. We'll back up to verse 61. "and [they] said, 'This man said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" And the high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes and said, 'He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses

do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?' They answered, 'He deserves death.' Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, 'Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?'" Again, his authority is being questioned. By whose name do you do these things? What authority do you say these things?

Jesus responds to them in a very quiet manner, not the way that you would think he would respond now. Now, yes, he makes a massive statement. He makes a statement, "I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power," to be seated at the right hand of the Father shows full divine power and authority. So he's making a big claim here but in this moment, he doesn't feel the need to show it because he is about to.

Time and time again, the claim is questioned. Whose authority do you do these things? Whose authority do you say these things? But at the resurrection it goes from claimed to proven. His authority is the fact that he is the divine Son of God. He is the ultimate authority. Jesus is the ultimate authority. He has proven this through his teaching, through the way that he interacts with those around him, but most importantly through his death, burial, and resurrection, his defeat of sin and death. He is Lord.

Jesus has all divine authority but does he for you? Many people like to look at Jesus as Savior but not Lord. What that means is you look to him for the benefit of salvation but you do not want to trust in him and follow him as your Lord, as the Lord of your life. And I think it's because we oftentimes use the word Lord too flippantly. There is power attached to calling Jesus Lord, that means that we have exchanged our own preferences for his, that means that we choose to follow him in obedience to wherever he calls us, and whatever he calls us to do no matter what and no matter the cost. For Jesus to be Lord is to set aside everything that you once knew to follow him. Is Jesus the Lord of your life? You know this by your obedience. You don't hold onto the things of this world. You don't hold onto your preferences, your sins. You lay them all at the foot of the cross and say, "You are the Lord of my life and I will follow you wherever."

To submit to the authority of Jesus and to submit to Jesus is to recognize that he truly is your Lord, but there is comfort in an implication of this passage. For Jesus to say back in Matthew 28, for Jesus to say, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," is a claim for us to submit his authority but also the truth that Jesus is sovereign, that he rules over all. We interpret Scripture with Scripture and we see this to be the case throughout all of it. God is sovereign, Jesus is sovereign over all things. There is a great comfort in that. There is comfort in the sovereignty of God specifically surrounding missions and discipleship. A lot of times people try and stick those who believe in Reformed theology with, "Well, you must not like missions." That is not the case. In fact, the sovereignty of God is the greatest encouragement and comfort in missions because it's not up to the missionary. It's up to God and God alone. There will not be a single sheep that is missed by God. He knows his sheep and his sheep know him. So it's not up to you or I to save someone. It's not up to our ability to deliver the gospel in this great manner. It does not matter if you are a great orator, if you have a wonderful platform. All that

matters is that you submit to the authority of Jesus and you follow him wherever he has commanded you to go and there is comfort in the fact that God will not miss a single one that he has called for the glory of his name.

A commanding officer does not take insubordination well. If we're looking at this as a wartime commission, a commanding officer does not take insubordination well. It is not as if you were in the army and you were given a command to march into this specific region, you can't just look at your commanding officer and say, "Don't really feel like it today. I'm good. Feeling a little tired, I haven't had my coffee. A little hungry, so can we go get lunch first?" That is not going to end well for you so why do we treat Jesus that way? Why do we treat God that way? When he calls us to go, why do we look at him and say, "That's for some people but not for me"? Why do we look at him and say, "Well, it's not a good time for me. Well, there's a lot going on in my life that you're really not paying attention to hear, Lord, so I'm going to check out. I'll do it again another day." A commanding officer does not take insubordination well so do you live a life marked by submission to Jesus as your Lord? Is he the Lord of your life? Are you willing to follow him in obedience in every command wherever that might lead you? It's important that the Great Commission begins in this way. Jesus is not saying you go on your own authority, that you go based upon your skill. You go in the authority of Jesus Christ, in his sovereign power.

So we must, first, submit to Jesus. The second thing in asking the question, where do we go from here, is obey the command of Jesus. We must obey. Verse 19 is the command, "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," and the second half or the first half of verse 20, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." So there is the command to go.

The question is: where? Where is this command to go? Now many people have used this as it is only for international missions. Again, I love international missions, but that is not what this is only for. But the danger in looking at it as only for international missions is it is a cop-out for us. God has not called me to be an international missionary so therefore I don't have to go. But that is not what this passage is describing. We know so when he says "all nations." You go, command to go, we'll come back to what it means to make a disciple, to all the nations. All of them. This is one of them. All of them. He's vague for a reason because he knows his gospel is going to expand to every corner of the globe. For us that means that we go right here, right now. We do not wait until God gives us a sign to go to Africa, the Middle East, Europe, South America, Australia. We go everywhere. We go right here. You're surrounded by unbelievers right here. America might be called a Christian nation but it is anything but that. The gospel is needed here. The gospel is needed in our neighborhoods. The gospel is needed right around this church.

So we go. It is a command for every Christian to be a goer. Now on missions, John Piper makes the comment that there are three types of Christians in the world. 1. There are goers. 2. There are senders. 3. There are unfaithful. But I see it there is one type of Christian: a disciple-maker, period. Every Christian is a disciple-maker. Every single one

of you. If you are in Christ, if you are a new creation, your task, your commission make disciples and make disciples that make disciples, and we'll look at that more in just a second. But you are commissioned or commanded to go.

Where do you go from here? I'm not really sure. Some of you it's right here. You're going is staying right here and making disciples for the glory of the name of Jesus. Some of you it's relocating to a different part of our country to go and make disciples, and my prayer is that for some of you, this will mean picking up you and your family, going to the hardest reached places in the world and making disciples. But the message is clear, every Christian is a disciple-maker.

So what is disciple-making? This disciple-making mandate, what does it mean? Well, here's what it isn't. Specifically thinking on international missions, there's been a lot of really bad philosophies around missions. I call it the save and run. You get in. You preach the gospel. You see some people confess Christ and then you hightail it out of there. Honestly, that's been the approach for many churches, shamefully, that they just preach the gospel, they see someone that says, "I want to follow Jesus." They say, "Great," they baptize them and they get out of the country. That is not disciple-making. We know this because of what is said afterwards, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," doing what? "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them and teaching them to observe." And I'll tell you why I differentiate those two in just a moment.

Here's what it also isn't, it's not just throwing money at it. Well, if we just give all of our money to that, we're good, we check the box. It is important to give, do not let me downplay the significance of that, give and give faithfully, but that is not only it. A lot of people think that if we go into other countries that are impoverished, if we give them money, that's fixing the problem. It's not fixing the problem because the problem is sin. Money doesn't fix sin.

It is not merely giving to the needy, it is not saving and running, it is investing. Here's what disciple-making is. It starts with what is being assumed here of a proclamation of the gospel. Proclamation of the gospel. In order to proclaim the gospel, you must know the gospel. If you're trying to share the gospel with other people and you have no idea what you're saying, you need to grow in that, and quickly you must know the gospel to reach everyone in the world with the gospel. But then it goes to baptism. Baptize them. Baptism is beautiful. It is an outward confession of inward transformation that we are confessing through the act of baptism that I have been saved from death, brought into life through Christ Jesus. And what's even more glorious about this passage is it's a Triune confession, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is a richly theological passage. It is the Father that calls. It is the Son that redeems. It is the Spirit that works within the heart to transform. This is a Triune confession.

They are baptized showing the truth of the inward transformation. So we're typically pretty good about that part. We've got the sharing the gospel part. We've got the going part. We've got the baptism part. It's the back end of this passage that the church has

grown really bad at, if we're just being honest. We're really bad at the second half of disciple-making, teaching. To make a disciple is not preach and run. To make a disciple is to see God save a sinner, to see them outwardly confess inward transformation, and to invest in them. The model of discipleship comes directly from Jesus. He had his 12. He invested in them heavily. They watched him interact with people. They watched him do miracles. But he taught them constantly. He poured into them all of the things that he could in his time that he had with him.

So friends, to make a disciple is to invest in people. Discipleship is what the church is to be doing, period. We are to be pouring into one another. When we see a sinner saved by the grace of God, we celebrate and we get to work. Baptism is not the end of the story, it's the beginning. It's the beginning of a new life, a new life where we are to, as the church, make disciples, teach them, teach them all the things of God, teach them his word, teach them his doctrine, his truth so that we do not have a bunch of lost sheep walking around who have no idea the God that they have confessed. Teach them.

We are to invest and let me go ahead and correct something that we fall into very quickly. The church is not the only disciple-making entity. Let me explain. The church as in the leadership of the church, are not the only disciple-makers. Christian, your job is not just to see people come to church. If you invite your friends now it's up to the pastors and the elders and the leaders. This is a commandment for every Christian, "Make disciples." Every member ministry. Everyone is to be involved in this commission. You are to make disciples, teach them to know God, teach them to know the glories of the gospel, but here is why I make a distinction between teaching them and teaching them to observe. It's not just knowledge, it's knowledge and application, it is living the truth. We teach in disciple-making people how to walk with the Lord, how to live the Christian life. We invest in them partially through modeling it ourselves, but also through showing them in God's word what God has commanded them to be and to do. Show them what it means to walk in communion with the Lord. Show them what prayer really looks like. Show them what it means to sit under the preaching of the word to worship God. Show them what it means to make other disciples. Make disciples who make disciples.

I want to show you something very interesting that was recently showed to me by an author. Turn with me to Genesis 3. Genesis 3. Actually chapter 1 and 2, not 3. 1 and 2. We're not going to read all of it, I promise. But I want to highlight some important things here. Verse 28 of chapter 1 of Genesis. God has just created all things. He has made man in his image and then verse 28 happens. "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.'" So God's commissioning sending out of Adam and Eve as this, "Fill the earth with my glory." To be made in the image of God is to display God's glory. To be fruitful and multiply is to fill the earth with God's glory. But then chapter 3 happens, the problem of sin. The image of God is defaced, defaced but not erased. There is the problem of sin

And now let's think through the passage that we just read, Matthew 28, one more time. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." This should sound familiar to Genesis 1 and 2. The original commission, fill the earth with God's glory, make image-bearers. The Great Commission, fill the earth with the gospel of Jesus Christ, make disciples. The Great Commission is the fulfillment of the original commission. The Great Commission is the fulfillment of the original commission so our task is to fill the earth with the glory of God with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, seeing his kingdom advance to the end of the earth. This is glorious that God has fulfilled what man had broken, that no matter what our sin does, his kingdom and his glory will not be stopped. It will continue to move forward. God is not thwarted by our sin. He has not been overcome by our sin. He has had a plan from the very outset that the whole earth would be filled with his glory and the Great Commission is the fulfillment of that plan.

His kingdom is going forth through his chosen instruments and what glorious news is it that God has used us to advance his kingdom. I look at myself and I am enamored by that, overwhelmed by that, and frankly, feeling like why would he use me? And yet that is exactly how God operates. He uses his children, his disciples, to advance his gospel. It is not a picture of God needing you. God does not need you in the way that we think he needs us, as if to say, "Well, God needs me. I'm pretty special. I'm pretty important. So if I don't do this, it's not happening." God does not need you, and yet he chooses because he is a loving, gracious, caring Father to use you for his glory. This is an incredible truth.

So we must go. We must go. We must go to our neighbors, to our family members, and we must go to the ends of the earth proclaiming his gospel, seeing his glory advanced, his kingdom advanced. He will not be overcome by the problems of this world. He will not be overcome by natural disasters. He will not be overcome by other religions. God's kingdom will advance. So will you get in the fight and be obedient to him, submit to his authority and make disciples?

Does this feel daunting to you? It does to me. That's why the very end of verse 20 is so important. The third thing: we rest in the comfort of Jesus. He says, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," and here's the comfort, "behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." Disciple-making is daunting. It's hard. When we look at the truth that there are 3 billion people considered unreached, there's not enough people in this room to make a dent. It's daunting and yet Jesus offers a promise, "I am with you always, always, to the very end of the age."

What a great comfort that that is, that Jesus has given us his Spirit to work within us, to sanctify us, to build us up, to encourage us, to convict us, and to send us. The greatest comfort in this passage as we go back to the very beginning of we're seeing the sovereign power of Jesus, is the fact that not one sheep will be missed and not one thing will happen to you that God is not using for the expansion of his kingdom and for his glory. There will not be a day missed in your life. You will not live one day longer than God has already ordained. And you will not live one day shorter. God is completely and sovereignly in control of all things. So it removes the pressure knowing that it is God who saves and not us, it removes the pressure of being fearful of things that might happen

to us because we know that Christ is reigning supreme, seated at the right hand of the Father and has given us his Spirit to be with us always.

This does not mean the Christian life is easy. A couple weeks ago I preached on 1 Peter 1, suffering will happen, and when you get in the heat of the battle, it gets worse. Just putting cards on the table there. It gets harder and yet Jesus says, "I will be with you always even to the end of the age." Not one thing happens outside the sovereign control of our God. His Spirit is given to us to work through us for his glory and the advancement of his kingdom. He will, will take us where he wills. He will protect us until our very last day. And he will be working through his servants to expand his kingdom until the very end.

So my question is: where do we go from here? Where do we go from here knowing that there is the command to go, knowing that there are so many problems in this world, but the greatest problem is so many billions and billions of people who do not know the hope of the gospel? We carry that within us. We have been commissioned to go. Where will we go from here? Again, I don't know the answer to the question for each one of you. I know for my life I'm really wrestling with this. It's been something that has been almost crushing me in some ways as I consider why God has given me a burden for the nations, but each one of us has to examine our own lives. Where do we go from here? "God, where will you send me?"

I want to conclude with the book of Acts, Acts 1:8. This is Luke's account of the disciples being sent out right before the ascension. Let's back up to verse 6, chapter 1 of Acts. "So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'" The book of Acts is one of the greatest books in all of the Bible. This is the thesis statement. The entire thrust of the book of Acts is the gospel going forth.

The very first few chapters you see it happening in Jerusalem and then it starts to expand; through persecution and new believers it expands to Judea and Samaria. Paul is converted and then we see Paul start to go all over the known world at that time with the gospel. In part, in a very small part, this thesis statement is fulfilled by the end of the book of Acts. The gospel had gone forth to Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth as they knew it, and yet there is still work to be done but here's the encouragement. Where are we today? We are in Duluth, GA and we're a long way from where this was happening. The gospel has made it all the way here. God's kingdom has expanded here and it is going to continue to expand and it does so through his disciples that make disciples, his disciples that refuse to hold onto their comforts, refuse to be numb to the pain and needs of the world, and go under the conviction that they submit to the authority of Jesus Christ but they're willing to follow him wherever he calls. They obey the command to go and they rest in the comfort so that his kingdom will be known in every nation. The Bible says that every tribe and tongue and people group will know him.

I would like to make an amendment to our vision statement here at Providence. The vision statement as we read it is to glorify God by knowing, living and proclaiming his truth in the world. I might get in trouble for this, but hopefully not. I want to amend it to say to glorify God by making disciples who know, live and proclaim his truth in the world. May we be a church that makes disciples for the glory of his name.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you've chosen to use us weak and poorly instruments as we are, to expand your kingdom. God, I pray that each one of us would consider the question where do we go from here, and I pray that you would raise up a generation of people that lay aside everything to follow you wherever you call them. I pray that we would be broken and burdened over the needs of the world and that we would desire to pursue people in the hardest to reach places so that your name is known. Take away the comfort and the numbness and give us hearts for you and for the nations. I ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.