

# The Great Commission (Part 2)

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Last week we began looking at three passages of scripture that are all part of one story. Though we often separate them out into individual passages, **together** they give us a clear picture of one of the most powerful moments the disciples ever experienced with Jesus.

Now, I grant you that walking on stormy seas and calming the winds and waves are astonishing. I would agree that healing the sick and raising the dead are mind-expanding experiences. However, I submit to you that it is the synergy of these three passages interwoven that is absolutely life altering – both for this temporal life and the eternal one to come.

It is the very core of these passages that Jesus boldly makes his claim; “All authority is mine, both in the earthy realm and in the heavenly one. It is a dividing line in his relationship with his disciples. He has been their rabbi, their friend, their healer, a miracle worker – now it is clear that he is affirming his Lordship.

Let's look at the passages again:

## **The Proclamation:**

*“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him - but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, ALL authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. THEREFORE, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commended you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:16 - 20*

While they are still on the mountain with Jesus...

## **The Provision**

*“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ Acts 1:6 – 8*

Ten days later

## **The Product**

*“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 2:1 – 4*

Last week, we determined that before we are able to be effective at being sent out as his disciples, we must first of all deal with our own doubts and fears. Easier said than done – I know! We also began to understand that he has claimed Lordship over us and over any situation we may face. I've often wished that he would execute his Lordship over situations I have faced a bit differently. Nevertheless, whether he calms the storm or the child in the storm - He is Lord!

The rest of Matthew 28:16-20 is what most have come to call, “The Great Commission.” Many of us can quote this passage in our sleep. It is so well known that some use this reference for computer

passwords or garage door codes. However, look at this command again in the light that he has already dealt with their doubts and fears AND he has already announced His authority! Now he deals with two more truths that should shake us deeply!

The first is the part of the Great Commission that we are most familiar with. “Go and make disciples.”

Sometimes I like to write it *GOANDMAKEDISCIPLINES!*

That kind of reminds me that just going does not fulfill the command. In fact, going and witnessing doesn't fulfill the command. We have only been truly obedient when our going results in intentionally making disciples.

I think for a long time we have comforted ourselves with religious platitudes. **“We can only plant seeds, you know, God's responsible for the growth.”** Or **“well that just isn't my gift, my gift is in other areas.”** I could go on, but you have heard them – perhaps like me, maybe you have even used some of them. I looked up the definition for platitudes. Webster defines a platitude like this:

- 1 : the quality or state of being dull or insipid.
- 2 : a banal, trite, or stale remark.

Okay, that hurts! Little wonder that Jesus dealt with our fears and His Lordship first. That way, this command has no middle ground. We are called to **initiate**, to be **intentional**. **GO** indicates focus, direction, and goal. It does not give a sense of simply waking up each morning and looking at the calendar to see what we have to do today. Our very acceptance of Christ is synonymous with accepting the command to intentionally, strategically, purposefully

*GOANDMAKEDISCIPLINES!* It is not dependent on gift mix, it does not

regard personality, it is not removed because of our circumstances. It is a command – it trumps everything else!

That means that as pastors, as leaders, our highest priority is to be strategically entering people's lives and effectively engaging them SO THAT they become disciples unleashed! Yes that includes preaching sermons, yes that includes small groups and teaching moments, but it also includes holding one another accountable in loving and affirming ways. It means providing opportunities to serve, grow, and become effective disciples. It also means making sure that your congregation understands the priority, embraces the great commission, and they are equipped to fulfill it and that the expectation that we are to

be people who *GOANDMAKEDISCIPLINES!* is clear.

What if that became the measurement by which everything else we do is determined? We haven't “had church” if *GOANDMAKEDISCIPLINES!* wasn't part of that equation. And we

certainly haven't been people living out the authority of Christ if we have not made that a guiding principle.

The second truth is that Jesus boldly confronts the disciples' world-view! It has become popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to talk about a world-view. Why not? Internet, television, jet travel, satellites, phones. We are well connected around the world. For the first time in history we can actually view foreign events in

real time. That was not the world the disciples lived in though, but it didn't keep Jesus from confronting them. "Go and make disciples of ALL NATIONS! Wow! Do you understand the world-view of those disciples? For a good Jewish man, if you weren't Jewish you were heathen. Gentiles and dogs (and oh yeah, women) were on equal planes! If disaster befell the Samaritans – great! If disease swept through the Roman guard – all the better!

Now Jesus confronts their prejudices and their ingrained narrow world-views and clearly commands them, "I have come to seek, save, and love ALL people – and YOU are my ambassadors." Color doesn't matter to him, ethnicity is our labeling issue, gender was His design from the beginning, and age is swallowed up in His infinity.

## *GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES of All Nations!*

You know they choked back their words and tried to reign in their emotions! Wait a minute, haven't we waited long enough, suffered at our enemies hands often enough? The Messiah was supposed to trod down their oppressors. He was "their" Messiah. Hadn't He come to elevate them above the sin and ugliness of this world? Wasn't the promise that now they would prosper while the other nations groveled?

How about for you? How about for your congregation? What world-view are you holding that clashes with the Great Commission? What neighborhoods are just not "your kind of people?" I actually think we are more comfortable giving money to mission efforts 'over there' than engaging the folks in the neighborhood where our churches are located. Sometimes they don't even have to 'look' different than us. Sometimes it's what they practice or believe. Here are HIS words one last time. "Go and make disciples of ALL nations!"

Fears and doubts addressed; authority established; now the command is given to us clearly. It pushes us from our comfort zones, it messes with our unspoken world-views, and it delineates our obedience from just religious activity.

If these are hard words and concepts for us, imagine what they must have been for the original hearers. Surely they had way more justification for why they couldn't

## *GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES of ALL nations.* But we know

the rest of the story. Somehow they did shed the chains of doubt and prejudice. Somehow their love for what Christ had done for them overcame their selfish desires. But that's next week!

For this week, I invite you to join me in searching your own heart and mind. I know you are GOING... often and hard! The tough question is, in you "going" are you making disciples – real, authentic, on-fire, 'first-love' disciples? Remember, you have to be one first in order to lead others, but then the command is clear, the proclamation has been given.

Know that you are not alone! He has promised to be with you and to prepare you. Know that there are brothers and sisters around you who want to go with you and want you to go with them. The proclamation is strong and clear – but the joy, reward and relationship are sweet!

## *WELCOME TO BONDS OF DISCIPLESHIP!*