

## **Series – At the Cross**

### **#6 The Commission After the Cross**

#### **Matthew 28:16-20**

**Introduction:** The single most important thing to God is people. Think about this. Not one earthly commodity is going to make it from this world into the next – not your property, your home, your boat, bank account, trophies, not titles, not achievements, nothing. **The only thing that is going to make it from this world into the next is – people.**

The bible is also clear that every human being that dies is going to be resurrected either to spend eternity with God in heaven or in isolation from God in hell. So, the Lord wants every one of his followers to be joined together in a single mission and that is to look for people who do not know God.

That is why Jesus did not leave the church's job description to chance or to some religious committee. Before He left this planet, he told us exactly what our number one responsibility is, both corporately and individually. And in Matthew 28 we have Jesus' farewell address before He ascends to heaven.

#### **Read Matthew 28:16 – 20**

***“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.” (ESV)***

#### **PRAY**

Jesus very comprehensively says to His disciples what their future is all about, and what the future of His church is all about. Prior to this, the disciples had been with Jesus for 3 ½ years. They heard His teachings, witnessed His miracles, and

experienced His power and presence. He was crucified but He conquered death, hell, and the grave, and they saw Him several times over a period of 40 days since His resurrection.

The Bible and history tell us that each of these disciples accepted this Great Commission Mission and gave their lives for the sake of Christ.

***Nathaniel*** – missionary to Armenia – beaten to death.

***James the Lesser*** – preached in Palestine & Egypt – crucified in Egypt.

***Andrew*** – preached in Greece & Asia Minor – crucified.

***Peter*** – crucified upside down.

***John the Beloved*** – Boiled in oil, exiled to Isle of Patmos, received the Revelation, only one to die a “natural” death.

***Thomas*** – labored in India – martyred near Madras at Mt. St. Thomas.

***James the brother of John*** – preached in Jerusalem & Judea – beheaded by Herod in Ad 44.

***Philip*** – died a martyrs’ death at Hierapolis.

***Thaddaeus*** – preached in Assyria & Persia & was martyred.

***Matthew*** – died a martyr’s death in Ethiopia.

***Simon the Zealot*** – crucified for his faith.

For the last several weeks we’ve looked at the **Crowd around the Cross**, the **Criminals on the Cross**, **Christ on the Cross**, “**The CRIES from the CROSS.**” Or you could call it “***The Seven Last Sayings of the Savior,***” *before He died.*

***I want to talk about the Lord’s Great Commission Mission after the Cross.***

I want to ask two questions, as we get started:

**(1) Do you believe that the presence of God through Jesus Christ can radically change and transform a person’s life? If it did, that’s why you still follow Him.**

**(2) Do you really believe that your relatives, your friends, neighbors, and co-workers would be better off if they truly knew God and had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?**

**If you answered "yes" to those two questions and you really believe in the life changing power of God's presence in a person's life through knowing Jesus Christ, then the single greatest gift you can ever give anyone is an explanation of how to be saved.**

Jesus had a plan A for His church, He did not have a plan B. And these words express His intentions, and His desire for what we should be about, what our priorities should be, what our resources should be invested in.

We also have in John chapter 20, verse 21 where Jesus said, ***"As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you."***

And then from Acts 1:8 Jesus said, ***'You will receive power, when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'***

A commission is the act of entrusting or giving authority to a person so that they can perform certain acts or duties. That is exactly what Jesus encourages His disciple in verse 18.

**Notice that what's called the Great Commission is sandwiched between a Great Affirmation and a Great Promise on the other.**

### **I. The Great Affirmation gives us Authority in Jesus' Name.**

The risen Jesus says, ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."***

It's a staggering claim, when you think that Matthew is writing his Gospel 30-35 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus claims to be the one to whom Caesar himself will bow the knee; that He is the Lord not just of the church, He is the Lord of history, He is the Lord of nations, He is the Lord of the universe;

that is the affirmation that the early Christians made when they confessed at their baptism Jesus Christ is Lord.

It's more than just a personal statement, or a political statement; it's an all-encompassing statement of supreme and universal Lordship.

Authority is the right to rule; it's a **positional issue**. A policeman has the right to stop traffic at an intersection because of the position of authority represented by his uniform and badge. Similarly, Jesus gave His disciples His badge to carry. They had the right to rule because of their position as followers of the One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth had been given.

In contrast, power is the **ability to rule**. A policeman may have the authority to stop traffic, but he doesn't have the physical ability to do so. If he tries to stop traffic by his own power, he will probably get run over.

Jesus charged His disciples with the responsibility to proclaim the kingdom of God. Had He not also given them authority and power in the spirit world, the demons would have just scoffed at their feeble attempts and sent them running for cover (as they did the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19).

The truth is that, while in yourself you don't have the ability to resist Satan and his demons, in Christ you do. The Israelites looked at Goliath fearfully and said, "We can't fight him." But young David looked at Goliath and said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). The army saw Goliath in relation to themselves and trembled; David saw Goliath in relation to God and triumphed.

***"Be strong in the Lord [your authority], and in the strength of His might your power."*** (Ephesians 6:10).

Notice the word ***"therefore"*** links the great affirmation with the Great Commission.

## II. **The Great Commission flows out of that Great Affirmation.**

It is because Jesus Christ, is the King of Kings and Lord or Lords, that his followers have a mission to the nations.

- A. There is only one verb in the Great Commission, and that is the verb "**make disciples.**" All our English translations begin with the command "go," but in the Greek, it's a present participle, which strictly speaking should be translated, "***Therefore, as you're going, make disciples of all nations.***"

So, the emphasis is not on the going, as much as it is on the making of disciples.

The disciples to whom Jesus is speaking here were all Jews who had left their jobs, everything that they owned, to follow Jesus. Now, Jesus says, just as you have learned from me, now you invite others to do the same.

Jesus is saying the whole world is your mission field, invite all peoples of all cultures and all geographical areas to become my students, to learn from me.

Now, how are they to do it?

- B. Well, he goes on to say **baptize** them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the ancient world, to be baptized in the name of somebody meant to come under the allegiance of that person, to surrender ownership to that person.

To be baptized into the name of the triune God means that now your supreme loyalty is no longer to your biological family, culture, ethnic group, or your nation's state, it is to the triune God. You belong to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That is where discipleship begins.

Baptism is a corporate event, not an individual event. You are baptized into the community of all those who profess the name of the Lord. Discipleship is not something we can learn in solitude; we cannot learn it individualistically. It is in community, the community of the baptized, that we learn what it is to be a Christ-follower, and to grow into the mission and the purposes of Jesus.

- C. "**Teach** them to obey everything that I have commanded you." So, what is it that Jesus has commanded them? Well, to find out we've got to go back to Matthew 5-8, the Sermon on the Mount. You can think of it as the Christian manifesto of the kingdom of God.

And then as He says in Acts, '**You will receive power,**' that's the word dynamo. And so, Jesus is saying, you will receive a dynamic power from God's Spirit, "when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses." "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem," that was their headquarters, where they began. And then He spread it out, "In all Judaea," the surround area from Jerusalem.

And then He mentioned Samaria, and that has a very special point, because Samaria was a place where Jewish people did not go. The people in Samaria were outcasts. And so, Jesus is saying here, you are to go into the Samaria's of the world, into places that you would normally avoid.

Today that would mean perhaps the inner city, or countries where there is great political harm and unrest, and tremendous poverty and oppression that we would go there. "And on to the ends of the earth."

What does it mean to be a witness? It means to live in Christ, and then to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God.

The church is not a social club, a civic club, a country club, but the living body of Christ, alive and well in the world.

### **III. Our Response to the Great Commission is to:**

#### **A. See people who need God.**

Thom Rainer, one of the foremost church growth and evangelism experts in the world, worked with fifteen research assistants and spent two years going to all fifty states and Canada. He interviewed hundreds of unchurched people in every major age and ethnic group. He discovered 5 faith stages people are in.

The people that we fear the most are highly antagonistic and hostile to the gospel. But they found that of the 160 million unchurched people in America, only 5% are in the category. In other words, only one- in-twenty people will be completely hostile to the gospel.

Then there are those resistant to the gospel, but they are not antagonistic. They really don't want to hear the gospel, but they won't be belligerent about it. In fact, this will shock you this group makes up only 21% of these people.

Let me put it another way. Seventy-five percent of the people that you meet will either be open to discussing the gospel, open to hearing your story about Christ, or ready to accept Christ.

### **B. Seek people without God.**

Jesus himself said in Luke 19:10, "for the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10, NASB)

We are to do the same thing as Jesus. We are to seek out people who do not know God, believing that God will use us to help them know God. Here is the sad truth. The longer a person attends church, the fewer discussions they engage in with unchurched people, because they have fewer friends who are unchurched.

**What does that mean? That means that people who follow Christ must be more intentional about developing relationships with unchurched people.**

Begin to see your corporate office as your mission field.

Begin to look at your home as a place that God could use in an incredible way to reach your neighbors and your friends for Christ. We want you to get this mentality in your heart to look for everyone, everywhere, every day.

We ought to be intentional and purposeful in seeking out people who do not know God.

### **C. Share with people so they can know God.**

Let's imagine that you do see people who need God. Let's imagine that you do seek people without God. Let's imagine that you've cultivated a relationship with your next-door neighbor. You have tested the spiritual waters. Your neighbor believes you have a personal relationship with God, but your neighbor, on the other hand, does not.

Now imagine that moment comes when your neighbor says something along these lines, ***"how can I know God?"*** Or ***"how can I have a personal relationship with God?"***

You can pour yourself into developing friendships with un-churched people, building relationships, finding out where they are in their spiritual journey, but then completely lose the God moment and the opportunity to see someone come to Christ if you don't know how to share with people effectively so they can know God.

Start by writing down your testimony and be willing to share it. Include...

**1.What my life was like before I met Jesus**

**2.How I realized I needed Jesus**

**3.How I surrendered my life to Jesus**

**4.The difference Jesus has made in my life**

**STORY:** Eva Hart remembers the night the Titanic went down. She was on the Titanic, and she was one who got in a lifeboat. And here are her words: 'I saw all the horror of it sinking, and I heard even more dreadful the cries of drowning people, there were only 20 lifeboats, and most of those were only half full. More dreadful the cries of drowning people.'

And then she says: 'Lifeboat number 14,' she discovered, was the only lifeboat that went back trying to rescue people who were crying for help. The other lifeboats rowed aimlessly, listening to the cries of drowning people. Some of them were overcrowded, but most of them could have handled more people.

While people drown in treacherous waters around us, we may be tempted to stay dry, and make certain nobody rocks our boat. When we possess the riches of God, the assurance of forgiveness of our sins, life eternal, purchased freely by the blood of Christ, how could we row aimlessly in the world?

Envision what could happen in our church if every real estate broker, airline pilot, lawyer, homemaker, CEO, business owner, manager, or salesman said "I love my job, but my job is also my mission. I am here to see others who need God, and to share with them so they can know God."

### **III. The Great Commission has a Great Promise**



We finally come to the Great Promise: ***"For lo, I am with you always even until the end of the age."***

**Or as I heard one preacher say one time – "NO GO, NO LO."**

Jesus promises His empowering Spirit, His presence, to His church *if* we are engaged in the Great Commission. This is not a promise that we can take out of context and apply to any situation. It is a promise that we can claim, if we are seeking to obey Jesus, to be his disciples, and to be disciple-makers.

So, notice what a comprehensive text this is. ***All authority has been given to me. Therefore, make disciples of all peoples. Teaching them to obey everything that I have taught. And I am with you always ... "***

There are four "**alls**" in this text: Jesus has **all** authority given to Him, we are to make disciples of **all** nations, we are to teach that we should obey **all** that He commanded during his earthly life, and the promise that closes is that He will be with us **always**.

**Closing:** "In military strategy, a choke point is a geographical feature on land such as a valley, or a bridge, or at sea such as a strait, which an armed force is forced to pass, sometimes on a substantially narrower front, and therefore greatly decreasing its combat power. A choke point allows a numerically inferior defending force to successfully prevent a larger opponent because the attacker would not be able to bring their superior numbers to bear."

In the late summer of 480 BC, three hundred Spartan soldiers stood in the way of hundreds of thousands of Persians and the survival of Greece at Thermopylae, a small pass on the east side of Greece that had to be used by armies who chose to invade this part of the country.

The valiant Spartans knew that King Xerxes and his vast army had to pass through this narrow pass to get to the rest of Greece. And herein lay their advantage.

This passageway had a mountain on one side and the ocean on the other. As a result of this narrow pass, the Persian warriors lost their tactical advantage against the battle-hardened, highly strategic, physically superior Spartans.

Thermopylae or “hot gates” was the chokepoint to the rest of Greece and, for three sword-swinging, spear-thrusting days, the Persians fought the Greeks, and thousands upon thousands of Persians fell. Not until a Greek traitor supplied Xerxes with a secret path behind the Spartan lines did these powerful warriors become vulnerable. Finally, those 300 Spartans, led by their warrior-leader, King Leonidas, were slaughtered and the Persians invaded Greece. However, inspired by stories of Spartan courage, the Greeks united and, eventually, turned back the Persians for good.

Jesus told his followers to “Go and make disciples ...”, and a big part of making disciples is teaching them to make disciples.

The chokepoint for disciple makers is evangelism. If you can’t make a convert, then you can’t make a disciple. And if you can’t make a disciple then you can’t multiply disciples.

Far too often, standing in the middle of that chokepoint is not 300 well-trained soldiers but an army of overused excuses (“I don’t have the gift of evangelism,” “Evangelism doesn’t really work in a postmodern culture,” blah, blah, blah), soul-winning and discipleship are for the professional clergy.

True discipleship multiplication is always messy. It’s book of Acts kind of messy. It triggers chaotic problems and forces us out of our La-z-boys and into messy relationships. It causes us to engage with the neighbors who live next door, the baristas who make our lattes, and the mechanics who fix our cars.

And when that barista, neighbor, co-worker, family member, mechanic or friend puts their faith in Jesus, the real work is just getting started. We’ve made it through “The Hot Gates” and now we must help them grow up in Christ.