

As You Go

Matthew 28:16-20

Today's Scripture is very, very important! These are the parting words of Jesus before He ascended into heaven.

It is called the Great Commission. It is the marching orders, the mandate that Jesus gives ultimately to all Christians.

In effect Jesus is saying : 'If you believe in Me, love Me, want to follow Me then this is what I want you to do. This is what I want to be your #1 priority in life – Your purpose for living. Go make disciples of all nations.

This section of the Word of God is so crucial to understand and keep in mind that I want to take it verse by verse.

v.16 "Now the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them."

The disciples headed back to familiar territory, for all 11 were Galileans. The mountain may very well have been the very same mountain where Jesus had been transfigured.

What I think is significant to see is that these 11 disciples represented the Church. And so what is the #1 goal of the Holy Christian Church and in particular our church? It is the command to make disciples. And therefore any church that is not reaching people with the Gospel is not obeying this mandate. They may be doing a lot of good things, but they are not doing what the Lord wants them to do first and foremost.

v.17 "And when they saw Him they worshipped but some doubted."

It is simply a fact that in every church there are varying degrees of faith and commitment. "Some doubted..." Some church members, even church leaders question whether making disciples is the chief task of a church. Indeed it usually goes hand in hand with their doubts about God and Jesus. They are the ones who doubt the miracles or argue with parts of the Word of God. They fear being called

fanatics. In truth they are no help in carrying out the Lord's marching orders and will be a drag on others doing so.

v. 18 "And Jesus came to them and said to them: 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me.'"

The Father exalted Jesus Christ (the God/man) after the resurrection. He is absolutely equal to the Father in every respect.

In heaven He has dominion over the angels. On earth He has authority over rulers and presidents and every governing authority. They may not know it. They may rebel against this authority, but in the end every knee will bow to Jesus.

Practically let me tell you what that means; it means when you pray to Jesus, He can grant you anything! He can make anything happen! He's in charge of it all and nothing is impossible for Him!

So why are we not praying more? Why are we not asking, seeking and knocking? Is our faith so weak, so unsure about Jesus? Let's pray to the one who has authority over all!

v.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."

Now we are at the heart and core of our Scripture. There is only one imperative here and that is to make disciples. To go is a participle. In others words it reads like this: 'In your going, in your everyday life be making disciples. And you make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching.

All reaching out – all evangelism is a result of experiencing Christ in us and letting that shine. Jesus chose to write His message on our hearts. People see by our words and actions that we are different. They can become curious or drawn in by listening and watching us as we live out our lives.

No true Christians can or even wants to keep thoughts about Jesus locked away or hidden. And of course our actions display our hearts.

The “go” in this verse is not just a flat command. It is more like an encouragement. Go – tell what you know about me...what I did for everyone by dying on a cross! Tell them about forgiveness and the incredible love of God! Tell them about the Holy Spirit who will lift them up and take the scales off their eyes so they can see the truth! Go and don’t be afraid, don’t be anxious because I’ll be with you.

Baptism is a sacrament –a sacred act that connects us to the Triune God. We are adopted into the family of God and ready to take on family ways. You can never remain purposefully unbaptized and think you are part of this family. So we want to see people get baptized both children and adults so they can be connected to the promises of Christ.

What is a disciple? A disciple is not born a disciple – they become one. After coming to faith in Jesus and pretty much simultaneously one is trained, disciplined and taught to be a disciple. Therefore disciples are learners, students, followers and apprentices. A disciple is one who goes somewhere (home/heaven) and with someone (following Jesus).

Now a disciple must be part of a local church so that they can be molded by other disciples and yes by pastors.

A disciple will make other disciples. 80% of visitors to a church come because someone they respected invited them. So we make friends for Christ. And be assured the Holy Spirit is operative throughout this progression.

I want you to think of someone you can be praying for, inviting to dinner, talking to over coffee or whatever. Befriend someone. Be there when they need help. Invite them to church or a Bible study. Take risks!

v.20 “...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always to the end of the age.”

When you think of Jesus’ commands, one stands out. John 15:12, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” In a similar vein, John 13:35 By this all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another.” As

that Christian song went: “They will know we are Christians by our love.” But they will also know by our public belief in Jesus, our trust in God in all matters and our enduring hope of eternal life.

All the 10 Commandments can be summed up by the word love: love for God and love for our neighbor. 1. Love keeps God first; 2. Love honors His name; 3. Love worships without fail; 4. Love honors your parents; 5. Love won't murder or even hurt their neighbor; 6. Love won't commit sexual sins. 7. Love won't steal; 8. Love won't lie or slander their neighbor; 9-10. Love won't covet. Of course we are sinners and will never be able to perfectly keep these commandments but we will strive to do so!

In I John 5:3 God tells us that His commandments are not burdensome, instead they are the good life!

As disciples we go to the Word of God instead of opinions. We listen to sermons, go to Bible studies, have our own quiet time of Bible reading and prayer, rather than depending on human philosophies. And we are to obey. As Jesus said, ‘Don't just hear the Word, but put it into practice.

Then this Scripture ends with this extraordinary promise: I will be with you always! I will be with you in the good times and the bad times. I will be with you in times of celebration and times of disaster. I will be with you in times of plenty and in times of little. I will never leave you or forsake you.

Build your life on this truth – this promise.

As you go – as you live your life – believe in Jesus, honor Jesus, learn from Him, obey Him and do all you know how to do to make disciples!!