

# The Great Commission

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 28:18-20  
**Preached on:** Sunday, August 6, 2017

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Well, it's very good to be back after a little bit of time away. We missed you while we were gone. I want to thank you for the warmth and the kindness that you showed to Steve Kreloff. He was very encouraged by his time here and I was very encouraged by his ministry as we were able to enjoy much of it during the live stream. Steve Kreloff of Lakeside Community Chapel in Clearwater, Florida is a true friend to Truth Community Church and I know you realize that and it's proper and appropriate for us to acknowledge that publicly. I certainly am in his debt in so many ways.

I also bring you greetings from Pastor Brian Swillum who has ministered from our pulpit two or three times. We saw Brian while we were in Michigan. He is doing well and I had the joy of telling him how much he is loved here in Cincinnati in our church, and he was very quick to tell me that the feeling was mutual. So he sends his greetings. We hope to do more ministry together in the future as the Lord leads and so my heart is very full with the friends that God has given me in ministry, fellow workers for Christ, and I am so grateful for the way the Lord has blessed me with men like that in my life that I can in some way introduce to you as well and you to them.

The Mexico video that we just saw was a great encouragement, wasn't it? And just to see and put faces and put voices and have a sense of what is going on there and you just see that these are real men in real places that have real tender hearts and desires. I love it whenever Dane talks about his friendships there in Mexico because his heart just bleeds out, you know, and I know you've all seen that and it's one of the reasons why I love Dane so much, one among many reasons. But you get a little sense of why he has, why the depths of his heart go out. You just see these tender, soft-spoken men who are seeking to serve the same Christ that we serve in difficult circumstances in abject poverty. Dane was telling me just before the service that the average wage there is like three dollars a day and so when we send an envelope of multiple C notes in it, that is a huge deal to them. This is almost a years' worth of wages that we send in one of those envelopes to those men, and to us, I mean, this is the overflow of pocket change for us. And I hope that it gives you a sense of encouragement to know that we are able to be a part like that and to strengthen worthy men in their ministry, for you to see that your generosity is impacting them, and also for us to recognize and to maybe step back a little bit this morning to realize the greatness of the blessing that has been given to us here in this

room, here at Truth Community Church, here in our comparative wealth and prosperity, and to see that as our opportunity and to see that as our responsibility.

We saw in video and in Dane's report the opportunity and the genuine impact that has already happened and what I want to invite you to embrace in your heart this morning is the opportunity to build on it and for us to go back to the biblical foundation that would help us to see that this is the kind of ministry, the kind of involvement, the kind of view of the world that is exactly what we are supposed to do. I'm encouraged with what we have done. I'm encouraged by the things that are going on. There is much that you're not aware of that we don't speak about publicly. What today I want to do is to encourage all of us and to preach even to my own heart and say, "Let's excel still more."

And to do that, we want to turn to the Gospel of Matthew 28. The text that we are going to consider this morning will help us understand why we do these things and will also give us the sense that there is opportunity for us to do still more. Not for our sake but for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, not that it might minister to us and that we would be on the receiving end of our own generosity, but that those who are serving Christ in areas that lack the resources that we do, would find us a faithful friend alongside them and that we participate in their ministry as we come alongside and help them as we have done. Let's look at Matthew 28:16 through 20 and just to approach this with a sense of what does this mean for the future of our church. We've been at this for what, five and a half years now? It's a good time for us to return to this text and to refresh our minds on why we exist and what the church of Christ is to be and what it is to do.

Matthew 28:16,

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

These are obviously the closing words of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew has given his account of the words and the works of Jesus Christ and he closes with this passage called the Great Commission, and what we see if we had read through the entire book of Matthew, is that Jesus Christ had proven himself in his life of ministry. His genealogy as the Son of God was firmly established, his claim to be Israel's long-awaited Messiah fully vindicated, his propitiatory redemptive death on the cross has been accomplished, he is raised from the dead and now it is about time for him to ascend back into heaven. His disciples gather before him in Matthew's account for the final time and Jesus speaks to them. Now that his work is done, there is a sense in which he is passing his work onto the disciples and by extension the church that would rise in the aftermath of the ministry of the apostles. And what is it that we can say about Christ? He had proven himself with

signs, with wonders, with powerful teaching. He had proven that he indeed was the one true King of Israel and now having been crucified, he was raised from the dead.

What's the climax of all this? What is this account pointing toward? Well, Matthew's Gospel ends with this passage, this famous passage known as the Great Commission. Don't let the brevity of this passage fool you into thinking that maybe there is not a whole lot here in these three short verses, verses 18 through 20. Jesus has compacted so much into those brief words that are recorded for us. He speaks to the order of the universe, he speaks to the future of nations, he speaks to the mission of his church, and he expresses the power by which we minister, all packed into this one brief passage. And we find in this passage what we are called to do as Christians, what we are called to do as the church, and we also find the provision for that ministry set forth to us in utter clarity.

So what we want to do today is look at three vital parts of the Great Commission to reinforce what we are already doing as a local church, and to set the standard a little higher perhaps, to call us to even more because there is much work left to be done, and here you and I are sitting in a place where we have the opportunity and we have the capacity and we have the resources to be used in that which Christ has commanded. And so we need to understand this, we need to embrace this, we need to bring into our hearts and identify – here's part of what I want to say, beloved, is that to take our heart perspective on life and on our involvement in this church that we love, to take that and view it from this perspective, a little bit less about what you and I can get out of this church and a whole lot more about what we can give and how we can be used through this church. Not simply to be receivers of ministry but to be a congregation, to be a body that is a giver of ministry, that is a provider of ministry, that can be a support to others in the work of Christ and that's what we want to look at today.

And this is not, just so you know in advance, this is not a request for donations. That's not even going to come up in it. We don't deal with you that way and it's not the way we do ministry here so we're not going in that direction, rather what we want to do is we want to understand something that is at the very heartbeat of why a church exists. What is our purpose? Look, so many things again, wanting to come out of my mouth all at once. The church belongs to Christ because he purchased it with his own blood. The church is his and so what Christ wants for the church is what the church should become and aspire after and do. It's not at all about what we want. It's not about our felt needs. The first and primary question for any church is what does Christ want his church to be and when we ask that question, then Matthew 28 gives us the answer. We want to see these three significant aspects of ministry that Christ lays out for us here in this passage.

Let's look at the first one and we could say that, first of all, the first vital part of the Great Commission is the authority of Christ. The authority of Christ. This is where it all begins as we contemplate what is in front of us here today. Look at verse 18 with me, Matthew 28:18, "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" Jesus asserts a universal authority in the heavens and on earth. Jesus says, "All authority belongs to me. It has been given to me. It's mine." And

immediately we see that we look to Christ to define for us the mission of the church; we look to Christ to define for us what it is that we are to do.

The word "authority" refers to the right, the prerogative you might say, and the ability to enforce one's will. Jesus Christ has a will for the church. Jesus Christ has a will for Christians and he asserts that right. He declares that right and he has the authority, the prerogative, he has the right to do that because it was he who laid down his life for us. He is the one who is Lord and therefore as those who belong to him, as those that he has ransomed, that those who he has brought to himself, our first question as individual Christians, as men and women of God, our first question as a local church, is that simple question that the Apostle Paul asked him when he was confronted on the road to Damascus, "Lord, what would you have us to do? What is it that you would have us to do, O Lord."

Jesus has all authority and his ministry verified that claim. I want you to think with me. We won't take time to look at these passages but if you look at Matthew chapters 7, 8 and 9, you'll find all of these things that I'm about to describe to you laid out in Matthew's account of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' authority, his power, his prerogative, was asserted in multiple ways throughout his earthly time with us. He showed authority in his teaching. Men said, "Never has a man taught like this before." He showed authority over human disease. He showed authority over demons. He commanded them to come out and out they came. Supernatural evil beings responding with immediate obedience to the command of Christ because he has all authority: authority over the physical realm, authority over the spiritual realm. He has authority over nature. He spoke to the winds and the howling seas and said, "Hush, be still," and the water became like glass. Never has a man like that ever been on the face of the earth. He has the authority to forgive sins. He told the man on the bed that was lowered down through the roof to him, "Your sins have been forgiven to you." They challenged the claim and then he gave the man the ability to walk that he did not have, his physical power showing his authority over the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ has authority to forgive sin in addition to his authority over nature, his authority over demons, his authority over disease, authority in his teaching. He has authority to raise the dead. Lazarus in his tomb, there for four days and Jesus says, "Lazarus, come forth," and come forth did Lazarus do. He had authority over blindness, the ability to heal a man born blind. These and other matters and other aspects of the Gospel shows us that Christ has all authority over the physical realm, the spiritual realm, over things seen and unseen, over super mundane beings, over humanity. As we read of him in his word, he just elevates in greatness, in great authority over us and we see that he alone is Lord.

That is his great authority and I want you to notice and remember something as we consider the Great Commission here in Matthew 28: Christ is speaking here in Matthew 28 as one who has personally conquered death. He speaks as the resurrected Lord. Brothers and sisters in Christ, even death could not hold him. It holds everybody else, it will hold you and me if the Lord tarries, but it cannot hold Christ. So when Christ speaks here and he says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth," what I want you to see with that little brief survey of things is this: is that he was making no

empty claim when he said that. His prior three years of earthly ministry manifested in every conceivable way his absolute authority over everything in heaven and earth so that when he says, "All authority has been given to Me," it's an incontestable claim. It's undeniable. This is who he is and the resurrection was the crowning proof of his authority. When Jesus speaks the Great Commission, he speaks as one with power, one with the prerogative and the scepter to rule and that is the perspective from which he speaks as he speaks to his disciples.

Now, with all of that authority, what does he do? The second point here this morning: we're going to see the command of Christ. The command of Christ. Look at verses 19 and 20 with me. We will break this into two points here this morning. The command of Christ. Verse 19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Notice, beloved, the beginning of verse 19 there where it says, "Go therefore." Therefore. The bridge to the command, therefore being, I should say, Christ having established his authority says, "therefore," and then gives the command to the church. This command that is upon the church, upon the people of Christ, flows from his absolute authority that he has established in his earthly ministry. And here is what I would have you to see: Christ has universal authority and what he does is he gives a universal command. He gives a universal mission to his people to follow.

Look at it there again in verse 19, he says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Throughout the world. All the peoples to the ends of the earth. Go forth and make them my disciples." Now, on a grammatical level, the real command here, the central command is "make disciples." That is the mission of the church. We'll look at that more in just a moment. The going, the baptizing, the teaching, shows us how disciples are to be made, and as those who stand in the aftermath of apostolic ministry, the apostles representing the church that would flow from them, understand this, beloved: that Jesus sends us, Jesus commands us to go. And here's what you and I must understand; this will deal a death blow to the attitude of self-centeredness that can so easily rise up within even the most well-intentioned of local churches. Here's what you must understand. Here's the way that you must think about the church. Here's the way that you must think about yourself as an individual Christian, as those who have received the inestimable privilege of being brought into the family of God. As those who have received Christ and our sins have been completely forgiven and we are going to heaven and not hell as we deserve. Here's the way that you must think about those things, beloved. We are in a position of immense blessing in Christ, we are in a position of immense blessing of just material prosperity that would stagger most of the known world now and certainly throughout all of history and you and I share in that, even those of us that are the most of meager means comparatively within the room, compared to others we are so greatly blessed. Here's the thing, here's the thing in light of this command that says, "Go and make disciples." Here we are as Christians, here we are with the one true message that can deliver men from eternal damnation, here we are, we possess that, it belongs to us. Christ has brought us to himself and we have the lovely Lord Jesus to be our friend and our Savior and our Lord as we go through this pilgrim pathway called human existence. And it is so good and

such a privilege to belong to him, to know him and here's the thing: all of that blessing, my friends, is meant to be shared. We are meant to share that. We are meant to let others know, to send it out. To make disciples means to bring people to Christ and to bring them in a way that they follow him, that they live in submission to him. Here's the thing: we who are his disciples are meant to go out and make more disciples. We are not to think about this selfishly at all. We are not to say, "Well, I have this and this is what I want to keep." That's the death of a local church to get that inward focus and self-satisfaction spirit starting to dominate.

While I don't sense that spirit in our church, I really don't, it is necessary for us to go back to this and to remind ourselves of this, that we exist for the glory of Christ and for the benefit of others who do not yet know him. That's why we exist. It is not simply so that we can enjoy a body life and we can have a church that we like to come to on Sunday, the purposes of God and the authority of Christ call us to so much more than that. And because the church is his, because we are his by his shed blood, then Christ, as it were, calls the shots. Christ tells us what it is that it is to be like and we respond with a grateful submissive spirit that says, "Yes, Lord, of course. Whatever you say. This is what we embrace." So we who are disciples go and make more disciples. We teach them to receive Christ by faith for their salvation. We teach them to submit to his authority, to live in obedience to him, and therefore show themselves to be those who are truly following him.

And where does this go? What's the limit? What's the scope of the commission that Christ gives to his people? Look at verse 19 with me again, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," "the nations" being a term for the Gentiles. Up to this point the ministry of the apostles and Jesus' ministry was focused primarily on his earthly life on the Jews. Now Christ expands it and says, "This is for all of the nations. My life, my work, my death, my resurrection, it's for all of the nations." He asserts his authority over every nation in existence; 193 member nations of the United Nations plus two observer nations for 195 according to the stats that I've seen, 195 nations in the world as we speak here today and Christ asserts his authority over all of them and sends his church to all of them. It's staggering. It's staggering. There is no one outside the scope of the assertion of the authority of Christ; no one outside the assertion that Christ alone can save men from sin. Everyone else, every other path leads to damnation and destruction. Every other religion that is not Christ alone, by faith alone, based on the Scriptures alone, is damnable human religion.

So step back with me. I know you can't step back but maybe you could lean back in your seat, just to realize the magnitude of what we have. The magnitude of this, that this is Christ with all authority, Christ asserting it over all of the nations, and here we already have our share in it. This is staggering. It's wonderful and we realize that with great privilege comes great responsibility to respond to what Christ says.

Go back to verse 19 with me. He says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," he goes on and says, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The Trinity being expressed there. The singular name, the one essence

of God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And that that would be the name into which new converts were baptized.

Let's talk about baptism for just a moment. Jesus says this is a central part of making disciples, an ongoing part. Baptism is that which testifies to the saving work of Christ in a life. Baptism, let's be abundantly clear, baptism does not make you a Christian. Baptism is simply a reflection of a prior work of God in your heart picturing the death of your old man being raised to new life. Jesus commands it for every believer as a public testimony to the reality of his salvation. And in those days not so much may be in our current condition, in our current culture, but baptism being a stark statement that, "I have left the world behind. I have left behind my sin and I gladly and I publicly identify with Christ in the means that he has appointed me to do." And for some this is a break that cost them family relationships. For some it cost them livelihoods to identify with Christ in such a public manner. This is what Christ calls for. This is a reminder that baptism is an expression of faith that says, "I have left the world behind and I want to identify with my Lord Jesus Christ, come what may." There is a severing of prior associations that manifest that, "I belong to Christ and I belong to him alone and these waters reflect what has already happened in my heart. My old man has died and Christ has raised me to new life." Jesus commands this as part of making disciples.

Well, let's call a timeout, then, in a room of this size and ask a most foundational question as a result, a fair question from the text: have you been baptized? Have you been baptized? If not, why not? Why not? Perhaps you didn't understand the command. Now you have. Now you see it right there. I'm not making it up. It's in Christ's own words, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Perhaps you haven't seen the command, well now you have and it's your responsibility to seek baptism as an expression of your saving faith in Christ. Perhaps you've been reluctant to speak in front of men. Okay, I get that but do you know what, my friend? You should be far more concerned about what Christ thinks about you than what men think about you. Perhaps you say, "I'm too busy for this. I don't have time to seek this out." Are you kidding me? Where are your priorities that you say you're too busy for what Christ commands? That makes no sense whatsoever. Your priorities are seriously wrong. Perhaps, my friend, despite what you say about yourself, perhaps you're just not a Christian. That would certainly explain an indifference to the command of Christ. The one who knows Christ, who has truly come to him and submitted to him says, "Lord, what would you have me do?" And when Christ says, "I would have you to be baptized," you would say, "Yes, Sir. Yes, Lord," in response. And if that's just not important to you, you really do need to ask yourself where your heart is and I invite you in light of that to come to Christ, come to Christ not so that you could be baptized, come to Christ so that you could be saved, so that baptism would be a reflection of that in your life. Those of you that are convicted by this, there are blue folders outside the door that would get you started on the path. I encourage you to pick one up if this applies to you.

Well, go back to the text here. Verse 19, Christ says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," this is why we do what we do, and he goes on and in verse 20 he says, "teaching them to

observe all that I commanded you." Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And here, beloved, perhaps you are new to our church, perhaps you're visiting and you are relatively new to our church and you're just trying to figure out what's going on here, here's what you need to see: that in the true church of Christ, biblical instruction is central to making disciples. Christ commands the church not to be an entertainment venue to the culture, not to be a political force in government. Christ commands his church to be about teaching them what Christ has commanded.

Where's that found? It is found in the Bible, found in the Old Testament which Christ affirmed in his earthly teaching. It's found in the words of Christ found in the Gospels. It's found in the New Testament letters and the book of Revelation written by those men that Christ commissioned to do precisely that. The 66 books of the Bible, no more, no less in English, being that which we would instruct people in. Most of you understand this. I'm happy to reinforce it for those of you that are new. That is why the pulpit is in the center of this church building. That is why we spend 50 to 60 minutes teaching as we gather together today. It's not because I like to talk. It's not because of anything else other than the fact that Christ says the mission of the church is to teach; that we make disciples by instructing them in what Christ has said. It brings joy to my heart that you are here for the instruction of God's word on Sunday. I encourage you to take advantage of every opportunity that you find to have the instruction of this church feeding into your life whenever it occurs.

So what we do? We teach people the Bible. We teach people the doctrines of God. And this is so central and so important for you to understand, that genuine biblical ministry is instruction aimed at your mind and at your understanding. It is not primarily designed to make you feel emotional and to sweep you up with all kinds of gooey feelings as you respond to the twelfth iteration of the same chorus as the pulsating drums pound against the wall. That is not the primary point. The primary point is instruction, is teaching, that you would understand the word of God and that's why we teach. Gospel ministry is addressed, first of all to the mind, to the brain. It honors us as men who are created in the image of God that God has given a rational function that other created animals do not have. And so we go and we teach and do our best in our feeble ways to teach the full counsel of God.

Now as we think about this evangelistically, let me make an important point. Someone wrote to me a few weeks ago with a very intelligent question, and then this comes up often. The question was: by what right do I speak to my friends, my loved ones, about Christ when they know that my life is not all that it should be? That's a very good question and what I want you to see is that the answer is found here. By what right do we speak to others about Christ? By what right do we go to a man perhaps that we do not know personally and say, "You are a sinner and you need to come to Christ alone for salvation"? By what right do you do that? Some say that you must – watch, every word is important here – some would say that you must first build relationships with unbelievers to have a right to speak to them. Some of us feel like we have to get our own life in order before we can speak to somebody about Christ. Well, beloved, those and other manners of thinking, that's not a good way to think. That's not a good way to think. First of all,

your life is never going to be perfect as long as you are in this human flesh, so if the idea is that your perfection is what gives you the right to speak, you're never going to speak. It's good to have relationships with unbelievers, it's good for us to care about their concerns and their lives and all of that, but it's not your human relationship with an unbeliever that gives you the right and prerogative to speak to them about Christ. What is it that gives us the right to speak to men about Christ? You must understand this, we must understand this: Christians have the right to speak to unbelievers about Christ because Christ has commanded us to do that. The authority of Christ is the ground upon which we preach the Gospel to men. Christ saved us and Christ commands us to go. That is all the authority we need. There is no higher authority than Christ. And let's say it this way, that the objections of men and the limitations that men would try to muzzle us with, cannot contradict the authority of Christ. We have authority to speak because Christ has commanded us to go and to make disciples.

Now, I realize that's not fashionable and that all kinds of secular critics would like to silence the mission of the church and say, "Leave these people groups alone. Don't hinder them. Let them go and by what right do you speak?" I'll tell you by what right we speak, we speak because Christ commanded us to and that's our authority. Christ said, follow the flow of it, he said, "I have all authority therefore I command you to go and make disciples and to teach all the nations." That's all the authority we need, beloved. That's why we speak. That's why we preach. We proclaim Christ because he told us to and he is our Lord and circling back to the question that was asked me a few weeks ago, that becomes very liberating. That means that you don't have to be silent in the face of criticism of your own imperfections in life. That's not the ground upon which you speak. You don't speak on the basis of your righteousness, you speak on the authority of Christ and that's why we go, that's why we speak, that's why we teach as the central ministry of Truth Community Church, it's because it's how we understand the Great Commission.

So we evangelize. We speak to men about Christ with the hope that they will receive him, and as they receive him, we introduce them to baptism. We continue to instruct them so that they will learn to love Scripture and respond to Scripture and respond to Christ with a willing and glad heart. That is the mission of the church. That is what we do and, beloved, at the risk of repeating myself again and again on the same kinds of things, it is only Scripture that can condition a heart toward obedience to God. Simple human love, entertainment and music, cannot break down the hard walls of stone in a human heart, only the word of God has that power. The word of God is perfect converting the soul. So we honor the command of Christ with what we seek to do.

Third and final point: the promise of Christ. The promise of Christ. You know, let's think about this in the original setting for just a moment. Christ is speaking to this group of disciples and giving this worldwide command to them saying, "Go and make disciples of all the nations." Think about who these men were. They were nobodies. They were men of no influence. They were predominantly fishermen and laborers with their hands. Matthew was a tax gatherer. There was no intrinsic power, no intrinsic influence that these men had. Worse when you look at it from a human perspective, all of these men abandoned Christ at his crucifixion. When he was under arrest, Scripture tells us they all

saw it and fled. Now, we are just a few short time periods later, comparatively a few days or a few weeks later, and Christ is telling them to go out and make disciples of all the nations. On a human level, do you know what you call that? On a human level you call that utter insanity. How can these men who have no influence, humanly speaking and who had just so recently fled Christ at his crucifixion, how can these men possibly become the agents of the conversion of nations to Christ? How can that possibly happen? Well, it would be utter insanity except for one thing: when it is done in the name of Christ.

Look at verse 20. Look at the promise of Christ. Having given them this seemingly impossible command, he shows them means by which it can be accomplished when he says, "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." These disciples are able to go and do what Christ has commanded. We are able to do what Christ has called us to do. Why? Not because of our human strength because, beloved, you and I have no strength. We are utter clay pots of weakness but Christ says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," the point being that, "Men in this great command, in this great call that I have given you, here is the means by which success is guaranteed. I am with you," Christ speaking, "and I am the one with all authority in heaven and earth." The one who has all authority, who is with us always even to the end of the age, is the one who attends us as we do our ministry. Charles Spurgeon said this, he said, "Since all power on earth is lodged in Christ's hands, he can also clothe any and all of his servants with a sacred might by which their hands shall be sufficient for them in their high calling."

Personally, I thank God for that promise because I can't tell you how often and how recently, I don't care to tell you, I don't dare to tell you how often I feel the utter weakness of my own little part in this and my own utter inability for what the Lord has given us to do. Only when our eyes look firmly at Christ and see the fact that he has commanded us to go, and only when we see his promise, his sweet promise that, "I will be with you as you go," only then does an individual Christian, does an elder, does a church, does local church, does the universal church, find its strength and its ability and its power and its motivation to go forth. It's because and it is only because Christ is with us as we go. All other ground is sinking sand. Anything not rooted in a trust and confidence in Christ is doomed to fail. But with Christ, "Yes, Lord, we go. Yes, Lord, despite all of my weakness, despite all, we go in your name."

So beloved, in this ever so brief survey of this great passage, we see the call of Christ to go into the world and to make disciples. I'll say it once more: we do not exist to be inward looking as a church, content as long as our needs and preferences are satisfied, content as long as our lives are what we want them to be. Oh beloved, don't you see it? Don't you see it? I beg you, I beg you to see it, that it's not enough for us to have what we want and what we need. We look at faces and we look at peoples and we look at nations that are in utter darkness and when we see that, we cannot be content just with the fact that it's well with me and that it's well with you. Christ has sent us, Christ calls us to go and as long as there are people without Christ, the mission is not done.

And we as elders looking to the future in the next several months, next few years of our church, we really want to develop further, enhance this emphasis in the months to come. I don't know exactly what that will look like but I can tell you this, I can tell you this that just within our area, there are jails and nursing homes that need the hope of Christ. We live in a nation that is awash in sin. Muslim nations are in bondage to their false religion with no hope of forgiveness. We know missionaries, we know smaller churches near and far that could benefit from our help. It's not that we are the answer. No, that's not the point. The point is that there are some that we could help. There are some that we could be used for and it's our heart in God's plan to live out the Great Commission in the context that he has given to us. We want to grow and please the Lord in our obedience and we look to him to lead us into what that looks like. We have some ideas, we have some things in mind, but I ask you to pray with us, pray with the elders, that the Lord would be pleased to use us more in this fulfillment of the Great Commission to do our part as others do their part, recognizing that the Lord that is with us all will do his will.

In the meantime, coming to things personal to us in the room, go back to verse 20 and to kind of apply these things in a pastoral way to your own heart in your own life. Look at verse 20 where Christ said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Struggling Christian, discouraged woman of God, man of God feeling your weakness, let these words from J. C. Ryle encourage you as we close here this morning. J. C. Ryle said, "Let all true Christians lay hold on these words, Christ is with us always. He is with us daily to pardon and forgive; with us daily to sanctify and strengthen; with us daily to defend and keep; with us daily to lead and to guide; with us in sorrow and with us in joy; with us in sickness and with us in health; with us in life and with us in death; with us in time and with us in eternity." He continues, "Let us go on believing and not be afraid. It is everything to be a real Christian. None have such a King, such a Priest, such a constant companion, and such an unfeeling friend as the true servants of Christ."

My brothers and sisters, if you are in Christ, that Christ is the one who is with you as we go today, it is that Christ who has saved you, it is his faithfulness that you can bank your life and eternity on. And if you are here without Christ and this message today has made that clear to you, let me invite you to Christ. He made an atoning sacrifice at Calvary for sinners just like you and now he bids you to come. "Come to me," he says, "all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Bring your sins to Christ and lay them at his feet. Receive him for the salvation that he freely offers you and you can enter in and know this Christ as your own.

Let's bow together in prayer.

*O God, as we have sung, we ask you to help us rise up to be even more the church that you would have us to be. Thank you for the work that you have done. Father, thank you for the work that you have yet to do in us and through us. We present ourselves to you as servants ready to do your will. In the name of our blessed Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.*

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