

Rooted: Core Truths

Week 8: The Mission of the Church -- Matthew 28:18–20

Picture eleven men on a mountain in Galilee. They are not generals or kings or men of influence. They are fishermen and former tax collectors and ordinary laborers, and not long ago they scattered in fear while their Teacher was nailed to a cross. Now He stands before them alive, and Matthew tells us something startlingly honest: when they saw Him, they worshiped Him, “but some doubted.” This is no polished, triumphant scene. It is a small band of shaky, awe-struck, half-believing men on a hillside. And it is to these men that the risen Jesus entrusts the greatest assignment in human history. Last words carry weight, and these are among the last words Jesus speaks in Matthew’s Gospel. He gathers up everything He wants His people to do until He returns into a few sentences.

He begins not with the command but with His authority: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Then comes the commission: “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” And He ends with a promise that has carried His people through every danger since: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Authority, mission, presence. The church does not invent its own purpose or drift along looking for something to do. It has been handed a mission by the One with all authority, and it has been promised His company every step of the way.

It is easy to imagine that this assignment belongs to someone else, to missionaries who go overseas, to preachers and professionals, to the especially bold. We can settle into a comfortable, private faith, glad to be saved ourselves and content to leave the mission to others. But the commission was never meant to be outsourced. The church exists for this. Every disciple is meant to be part of making disciples, whether across the ocean or across the street, with a coworker, a neighbor, a child, a friend. The same fear that gripped those eleven grips us too, the fear of being awkward, rejected, or inadequate. And to that fear the answer is the same: all authority belongs to Jesus, and He is with us always.

That is where this week takes us, onto the mountain to receive our marching orders from the risen Lord. Read these verses slowly. Let the authority of Christ steady you, let the mission claim you, and let the promise of His presence drive out the fear that has kept you quiet.

Group Discussion: Many believers quietly assume that the mission of spreading the gospel belongs to missionaries, preachers, and a few especially bold Christians, while the rest of us are simply meant to keep our faith and live decent lives. Where do you think this assumption comes from, and how does it change things to hear Jesus give the commission to make disciples to all His followers, backed by all His authority and His promise to be with us?

Personal Reflection: Think honestly about your own part in the mission of the church. Do you see yourself as someone Jesus has sent to help make disciples, or have you quietly handed that responsibility to others? Who are the people in your life that God may be calling you to reach or to help grow, and what has been holding you back?

Read Matthew 28:18–20

Study Questions

1. Before giving any command, Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (v. 18). Why does Jesus begin the commission with His own authority, and how does the absolute authority of the risen Christ serve as the foundation for everything the church is sent to do?
2. We all live, in practice, under some authority, whether the expectations of others, our own desires, or the pressures of the culture. In what areas of your life have you not yet fully submitted to the authority of the risen Christ? What would change this week if you truly lived under His lordship in those areas?
3. Jesus commands His followers to “make disciples of all nations” (v. 19). What is a disciple, how is making disciples different from simply gaining converts or decisions, and what does it mean that the mission is to “all nations” without exception?
4. The mission is carried out by ordinary disciples reaching the people around them. Who are the specific people in your life, a neighbor, coworker, friend, or family member, that God may be calling you to reach or to help grow in Christ? What is one step you could take toward them this week?
5. Jesus includes baptizing new disciples “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” as part of the commission itself (v. 19). Why is baptism built right into the making of disciples, and what does this teach us about how a person becomes a disciple of Jesus?
6. Making disciples is not only something we do for others; each of us is also called to keep growing as a disciple. Where in your own walk have you stopped growing, settling for where you are rather than pressing on? What would it look like to take your own discipleship more seriously this week?
7. Jesus says disciples are to be taught “to observe all that I have commanded you” (v. 20). Why does Jesus emphasize teaching obedience to all His commands, not just believing the right things or obeying the parts we prefer, and what does this say about the lifelong nature of following Him?
8. It is easy to be selective with Jesus, embracing the commands that suit us and quietly setting aside the ones that are costly or inconvenient. Where have you been picking and choosing among Christ’s commands? What is one area where He is calling you to fuller obedience?
9. Taken together, the commission gives the church its mission: under Christ’s authority, to go and make disciples of all nations by bringing them to faith, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, with the promise that He is with us always.

Why is this mission central to the very purpose of the church rather than an optional activity for a few, and how does Christ's authority and abiding presence give ordinary believers the confidence to take part?

10. Look back across these verses. The risen Christ, holding all authority, has sent you to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach obedience, and He has promised to be with you to the end of the age. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth about the mission of the church that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Mark 16:15–16, preaching the gospel to all creation, “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved”; Acts 1:8, receiving power to be Christ's witnesses to the end of the earth; Acts 8:4, the scattered believers who went about preaching the word; Romans 10:13–15, how people can call on the Lord only if someone is sent to tell them; 2 Timothy 2:2, entrusting the message to faithful people who will teach others also