

The Great Commission- Small Group Notes - 19 May 2019

Read Matthew 28:16-20 - Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some **doubted**. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore **go** and make **disciples** of all nations, **baptising them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and **teaching them** to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, **I am with you always**, to the very **end of the age**."

- When you think about the example of the early church, what do you find encouraging about how God used them?
- What excuses do you think people might have for not sharing their faith? How do you sift these excuses to know which come from wisdom, and which should be challenged?

We are given a critical and valuable mission

Read Vs. 19-20

- What were the disciples called to do in verses 19-20?

Quote from Sunday - Bill Hybels - "Are you going to throw your one and only life into pursuing small fish, or will you risk tossing your nets out there in anticipation of catching the human-sized ones?"

- Often this topic makes people feel guilty. When is guilt a helpful motivator, and when is it unhelpful?

4 things that will hopefully encourage us, and help us live this out

1. The goal stays the same... but the means will change.

In the passage here the goal is clear, but the means to that goal will change... and might look different for you then for someone else.

- Can you think of examples of how the means to achieve the goal were different in the New Testament? Was Jesus' approach different with different people? What methods were used by the various disciples at different times with different audiences?

'Go' is actually 'going', in Greek, essentially while you are going. So, this mission is meant to pervade every area of life, and it is important that mission is not confined to one model.

- Can you think of parts of society whereby the means must be different then it would be for helping others explore faith? What walls might different people have to Christianity?

2. God uses imperfect, incomplete people.

Read Mt 28:17 – ‘When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some **doubted.**’

- How is it encouraging to have the doubt of the disciples right in the middle of an iconic passage like the great commission?
- Can you think of times when God used unlikely people to accomplish extraordinary ends?

Illustration from Sunday with quotes from Celsus (for those that asked about this). The second-century Greek philosopher Celsus captures well just how upside-down the Kingdom of God is—and just how confusing that can seem to unbelievers. In an attack on followers of Christ, he writes: “Those who summon people to the other mysteries [i.e. other religions] make this preliminary proclamation: "Whosoever has pure hands and a wise tongue." And again, others say, "Whosoever is pure from all defilement, and whose soul knows nothing of evil, and who has lived well and righteously." Such are the preliminary exhortations of those who promise purification from sins.

(essentially... other religions say if you want to join us... get your act together)

But let us hear what folk these Christians call. "Whosoever is a sinner," they say. "Whosoever is unwise, whosoever is a child, and, in a word, whosoever is a wretch, the kingdom of God will receive him." Do you not say that a sinner is he who is dishonest, a thief, a burglar, a poisoner, a sacrilegious fellow, and a grave-robber? What others would a robber invite and call? Why on earth this preference for sinners?"

3. We go... with Jesus' authority... in Jesus name

Read Mt 28:18- ‘Then Jesus came to them and said, "**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’ (**Therefore** go...)

Authority comes up often in Matthew in reference to Jesus... he taught with authority (mt 7:29), healed people with authority (mt 8:1-13), he forgave sins with authority (mt 9:6), gave authority to his disciples (mt 10:1). This is all authority before he died... he has more authority at the end of Matthew... now that he is resurrected and judgement, it says, has been given from the father to the son. So now Jesus has ‘all authority’ and on this basis says, ‘therefore go’.

So, there are a few parts to this. One part is about obedience. If Jesus has all authority, then I should obey.

But there is also a second part to this. As we go, we can expect that Jesus will use his authority to help us.

This connects to why, in Acts, the disciples are constantly giving credit to Jesus for any miracles that happen and were careful to do things in ‘Jesus name’.

- Have you ever had the experience of stepping out in faith to find that the Spirit of God gave you what you needed, when you needed it? What did you learn from that experience? Why might people find this difficult, even if they have seen God provide in the past?

4. Jesus goes with us

Read Vs. 20- ‘and I will be with you even to the end of the age’

Quote used on Sunday - Eugene Peterson in Under the Unpredictable Plant writes... “In every visit, every meeting I attend, every appointment I keep, I have been anticipated. The risen Christ got there ahead of me. The risen Christ is in that room already. What is he doing? What is he saying? What is going on? There is a text for [finding Christ in daily events] in St. Mark's Gospel: "He has risen,...he is going before you

to Galilee; there you will see him as he told you" (16:6-7).

"In order to fix the implications of that text in my vocation, I have taken to quoting it before every visit or meeting: "He is risen. He is going before you to 1020 Emmorton Road; there you will see him, as he told you." Later in the day it will be, "He is risen. He is going before you to St. Joseph's Hospital; there you will see him, as he told you." When I arrive and enter the room, I am not so much wondering what I am going to do or say that will be pastoral as I am alert and observant for what the risen Christ has been doing or saying."

- How can we grow in our awareness of having Christ with us?