

## **GREAT COMMISSION**

**Matthew 28: 16-20**

**16 But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mount where Jesus appointed them.**

**17 And seeing Him, they worshiped Him. But they doubted.**

**18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

**19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**

**20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

**We continue from Matthew 28 this week as we read verses 18-20. Last week we learned about the resurrection of Jesus and the hope we have in a risen Saviour who paid the penalty for our sin, dying on the cross at Calvary and victoriously rising again after 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb.**

**After He rose he went and spoke to the Women telling them to go and tell his disciples to meet him in Galilee. He probably chose Galilee because it was a familiar place for many of the disciples who were originally from there and it was also a place where much of His ministry had taken place. It seems appropriate to return to where it all began... there, in Galilee, Jesus called the disciples to be ‘fishers of men’ and now they would return to Galilee to be given the Great Commission of teaching all nations. Jesus invites the disciples to meet him there but He goes first to Galilee. He goes first because He is the shepherd. He goes first because He is the leader and He goes first because He is more ready for us than we are for Him.**

**But, before going to Galilee the disciples had already met Jesus, or rather He had come to them. He wanted to reveal himself to them so that they would be certain of the resurrection. In Mark 16 it says He appeared to 2 of the disciples in ‘another form’. Initially they didn’t recognise him so changed was his resurrected body ~ but when he spoke they knew it was Him and they went to tell their brethren. Many still doubted until they were able to see the risen Lord and touch the wounds of his flesh.**

**I think we can understand the disbelief of the disciples. They knew Jesus had been beaten, tortured and nailed to a cross. They knew without a doubt that He was dead, sealed in a tomb with a large rock and guards barring the entrance. It seemed inconceivable that He could be living again, able to talk with them, be held by them and eat with them. They needed to see in order to believe and of course that’s where the phrase ‘doubting Thomas’ comes from. We read in John’s gospel that when the other disciples told Thomas they had seen Jesus he said he wouldn’t believe it until he saw him for himself the place where the nails had pierced his hands and feet.**

**This gathering after the resurrection where some worshiped and some doubted is completely plausible because although they loved Jesus they weren't sure what to make of something so totally outside of their normal experience. However, the Lord doesn't rebuke them but gently affirms that He is the risen Lord.**

**Moving on more specifically to today's reading I'd like us to consider 3 main points:-**

**The Majesty of Christ in verse 18**

**The Mission purpose of Christ in verses 19-20a and**

**The Mentoring of Christ in verse 20b**

**Verse 18 again says... And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

**ALL POWER... let there be no doubt about it. Jesus was and is God incarnate. These words to the disciples re-iterate the position of Christ. He is their lord and king. He has the right to give this command and they have a responsibility to listen and obey.**

**A quote from Dr. Alan Cairns book "A sure Foundation" puts it like this, The Majesty of the kingdom is the cross of Jesus Christ. The King died. He died out of majestic love. He made a majestic atonement.**

**Then the king rose again, breaking the band of death and defeating the powers of hell.**

**The king ascended into heaven to hear the word of His Father, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."**

**As born again believers we can't simply pick and choose which bits of Scripture we want to follow and which bits to omit. Our lives should be lives of obedient and humble service to Him because we, just like the disciples, have been commanded by our Lord to do so. But, we shouldn't strive to live righteous lives just because we're commanded to ... our hearts desire should be to live obedient lives that glorify the Father and bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ.**

**Lets take a look at vs 19 and the Mission Purpose of Christ for believers.**

**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**

**'Go ye therefore'... there's no question about this being optional! Jesus says GO plain and simple. Now obviously the disciples were commissioned with spreading the gospel, first in Jerusalem and then among the nations. We're not all called to travel the world with the good news but we are all commanded to GO and spread the gospel message, among our neighbours, friends and family.**

**Now if Jesus has commanded us to ‘go’ we can be assured that He goes before us to prepare the way, that He is with us every step of the way and it is His authority through the Holy Spirit that empowers us to follow through this instruction.**

**So often we hide our light under a bushel. We don’t want to upset or offend people, or sometimes we’re more concerned with being popular so we almost actively avoid discussions involving eternal salvation but we really shouldn’t. Yes we have to be sensitive to people’s needs but the important thing is that we pray daily asking the Holy Spirit to guide us and use us to further the Kingdom of God. It should break our hearts to know that people are lost for time and eternity and that should spur us on to speak up and share the Good news with them.**

**The second part of verse 19 gives the second instruction ~ teach all nations**

**The disciples suffered much rejection and most were martyred for their faith but they fulfilled this command. They didn’t allow their adversaries to prevent them from sharing the good news. Now do you think these men would have continued if they had been in any doubt about who Jesus was? Absolutely not. They knew beyond a doubt that Jesus was Lord and they were prepared to speak this truth even unto death.**

**Peter may have denied Jesus 3 times prior to the cross but not now. Now the eyes of Peter and the other disciples were fully opened to the gospel truth and they wanted to share what they knew with others. To be honest I think they were probably unable to contain themselves! What they had experienced was so amazing, so extra ordinary that they just HAD to tell people. How could they keep such a miraculous thing to themselves?**

**But it was more than just sharing the truth. This instruction is to ‘teach’. This infers something deeper than just sharing the gospel. Yes people need to be converted but they also need to be ready to be disciples, or students, learning the word of God. So, the disciples were commissioned to teach new converts all the same truths that Jesus had taught them.**

**If someone we know is converted or young in faith then we need to be ready to teach them Biblical truths so that their faith might grow, be made stronger and more certain. We teach using the Word of God which we trust to be infallible on all matters of faith and doctrine.**

**Hebrews 4:12 says**

**For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

**This is the assurance we have that the best tool for teaching is the Word of God. It helps us to walk in the path of righteousness, to make choices in our daily lives that are honouring to the Lord and it is the essential tool for teaching others. That is why we need to be reading our Bibles daily, devoting time to the study and memorization of God’s word. So often we find time to watch the latest episode of a favourite tv soap but we procrastinate about studying the Word of God. Our hearts should be burning with a desire to know His word.**

**In Revelation 3 John writes to the church at Laodicea**

**I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**

**You see God doesn't want his people to be lukewarm. He wants us to be on fire for Him. I think too often today we're distracted by the worldly things but if we want to get to know God we need to read His word and take the time to get to know Him.**

**The final part of verse 19 gives the last part of the instruction... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost**

**As a church we believe in full immersion baptism as demonstrated by our Lord himself when He was baptised by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Let's be clear about one thing. Baptism does not save a person. Only the repentant sinner who calls on the Lord to cleanse him from sin and save him for time and eternity can be assured of salvation. That salvation is assured from the moment we believe and not reliant on the act of baptism.**

**So, there are several things the Bible teaches us about baptism which we should understand as part of the great commission so lets consider some key points.**

**Firstly, baptism is for believers. An unbeliever who is baptised gains nothing from baptism. He is still dead in sin and separated from God.**

**Secondly, a believer who is baptised does not have anything added to their salvation by being baptised.**

**In first Corinthians Paul wrote.. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.**

**So, if Baptism was the power by which people were saved then what was the purpose of the cross? You see the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary would be null and void if man still had to be baptised for salvation.**

**Thirdly, water baptism symbolizes our burial with Christ in death and rising with Him in newness of life.**

**Romans 6 says.. do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**

**Quite simply water baptism is an outward profession of an inward confession.**

**Let's move on to our final point.. The Mentoring of Christ.**

**Vs 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.**

**confirms the commission to teach the nations, but it also gives assurance that we're not left alone to do this. We have a wonderful promise from our Lord ' I am with you always to the**

**end of the world'. Whatever comes our way we are not alone. By the power of the Word and through the Holy Spirit we can have confidence in fulfilling the appointed commission. Of course it does take diligence on our part. We need to study the Word and pray faithfully so that we might have an intimate relationship with the Lord. For any relationship to be fruitful we need to invest time in it and that is especially true of our relationship with the Lord. It's easy to call out to God in times of distress but how much time do we give him when times are good?**

**Furthermore, whatever ridicule or persecution we face we can be assured we don't face it alone. In this world today there are many believers who are persecuted for their faith. We're blessed to have the freedoms that we have in the UK to practice and live out our faith without fear of persecution. Ok we might get a bit of ridiculing or an occasional put down from people but we aren't imprisoned, tortured or even murdered for our faith. We should be thankful for the freedoms we have and that should spur us on even more to share the Good news with our friends, family and neighbours.**

**I'd like us to be thinking about this as we go forward in to this week. Let us openly profess our faith and act in a Christ like manner throughout the days ahead. Sometimes the greatest witness is not what we say but what we do. Our lives should be a reflection of Christ and all that is good and holy.**

**Let's finish with these verses from Galations 5.**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**