

Go and Make Disciples  
Matthew 28:16-20  
Key Verse: 19,20

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...."

In the first part of chapter 28, we learned that Jesus has risen. Jesus' resurrection assures us that our sins are forgiven. So we don't need to dwell in a sense of guilt and condemnation. We are free in Jesus Christ! Jesus also gives us eternal life. This is not a mere continuation of this present life, with its limitations, agonies, and many kinds of diseases. It is life free from pain, sorrow and death; it is life with Jesus in his kingdom where we experience his love, joy and peace forever. This eternal life does not begin at some future time, but at the moment we accept Jesus as Savior and King. We don't need to worry about our lives. We live forever with Jesus! We have a living hope in the kingdom of God. Praise Jesus! Now that we have new life through the Risen Christ, what should we do? In today's passage the Risen Christ meets his disciples in Galilee. He helps them to realize who he truly is, and he gives them clear direction. When we listen to Jesus, we too can find our direction. We will study in three parts: Jesus' authority (16-18), Jesus' command (19-20a), and Jesus' promise (20b).

### I. Jesus' Authority (16-18)

When the disciples heard from the women that Jesus had risen, their hearts--which had been dead because of their sense of failure and sorrow--came alive again. They left Jerusalem and went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go (16). There they met the Risen Jesus. They were overjoyed. They recognized God in Jesus and began to worship him. However, some doubted in their hearts (17). Perhaps Thomas thought it was a ghost. Perhaps Philip said, "Logically speaking, resurrection is impossible." Actually, this gives us hope. We can see that they were like us in several ways. They were fearful, weak and doubtful. They could not deny their own ideas and human dreams. However, even though they doubted Jesus, the Risen Christ did not doubt them. The Risen Christ did not see them as weak, fearful and useless. He saw them as history makers who would change the world. The Risen Christ gave them a great command with authority.

Look at verse 18. "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" The Risen Christ made an amazing claim: to have all authority in heaven and on earth. To grasp the meaning let's consider the Risen Christ's identity, then, his authority.

The Bible teaches us clearly that Jesus is the Incarnate God who came to this world and took on human flesh. While on earth, he exercised authority that only God can claim. But he limited his use of authority; he did only what the Father wanted him to do. The devil tempted him to use his power to satisfy his own desires, and to save himself, but he overcame this temptation. He obeyed the Father's will to death, even to death on a cross. This pleased the Father God, and God exalted him. God Almighty, the Creator of all, gave Jesus all authority. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." All the kings, presidents, princes, judges and rulers will kneel before the Risen Christ and give an account to him. After suffering in the flesh as a man, after being tempted as we are and being without sin, after coming to understand mankind by being one of us, Jesus received all authority from the Father God. Now Jesus Christ, the God-man, can exercise this authority personally and directly.

This fulfills the prophetic vision given to Daniel: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Da 7:13-14). God raised Jesus from the dead and made him the King of kings and Lord of lords. As God's King, Jesus' resurrection was God's victory over evil, and truth's victory over lies. This gives hope to all who trust in him. Sometimes, when we look at the world, it seems that evil forces are more powerful than good, and that lies overpower the truth. But in the end, good and truth triumph--as God triumphs over all. Jesus who rose again is the final victor who restores God's righteous reign over all creation.

Now let's consider the scope and nature of Jesus' authority. The Risen Christ said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." After the Risen Christ ascended into heaven, he sat at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. With his direct and immediate access to the Father, he can bring petitions anytime. He uses this authority to intercede for his people as our Great High Priest (Heb 7:25). When the devil accuses us before God, Jesus pleads his blood for us, and God is satisfied. God declares us justified and no one in heaven can dare argue otherwise (Ro 8:33). It gives us great comfort to know that Jesus, the Friend of sinners, is in the highest place. Jesus also has authority over heavenly angels. God's angels worship him, acknowledging the absolute superiority of his divine holiness (Heb 1:6). At the Risen Christ's command, these glorious angels serve God's children.

While on earth, Jesus demonstrated his authority in many ways. Jesus healed every kind of sickness and disease, even leprosy (Mt 4:23; 8:3). Jesus taught the word of God with such power that hard-hearted people were convicted of the truth (Mt 7:28; Jn 7:46). Jesus drove out stubborn demons with one word from his mouth (Mt 8:32; Heb 2:14). Jesus calmed a stormy sea in an instant, demonstrating his authority over nature (Mt 8:26-27). Jesus proclaimed the forgiveness of sins and proved it by healing a paralytic (Mt 9:6). Jesus even raised the dead on at least three occasions (Mt 9:25; Lk 7:15; Jn 11:44). Jesus' authority is so great that it is beyond compare to any human authority. The President of the U.S. has been referred to as the most powerful man on earth. At his word, war machines around the world can be mobilized, affecting many lives. But his power is temporary and limited. When his term ends, his authority ends. And he seems unable to lower the price of gas. In contrast, Jesus' power is eternal and unlimited. Jesus has power over every sphere of life, and over all creation. In fact, it is Jesus who raises leaders and deposes them. We are often blinded by the allure of human authority. But Jesus' authority is beyond compare. We should believe Jesus' authority in any situation. When the early Christians believed Jesus' authority, they prayed against the powers of this dark world and experienced God's mighty victory (Ac 4:23-31).

Most importantly, Jesus claimed authority to give life, and authority to raise and judge all people. Jesus said, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it," (Jn 5:21). Jesus said in John 5:22-23a: "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father." Jesus' resurrection proved that he is the Son of God and that he has authority to do everything he claimed. This Jesus commanded his disciples and he commands us. What is Jesus' command?

## II. Jesus' Command (19-20a)

Let's read verses 19-20a. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...." When we analyze this sentence, we find that "make disciples" is the main verb, given as a command. In Greek, the words "go," "baptizing," and "teaching," all modify the main verb as participles. The word "go," may actually be better translated, "as you are going." However, by putting "go" alongside "make disciples," Matthew gives it the same semantic status as a command. So we can say that the emphasis is, "Go and make disciples."

What does it mean to "go"? It means that wherever you go, as you are going, make disciples. We should not be stagnant or complacent, merely enjoying the grace of salvation with no sense of responsibility. "Go" means "go and share the gospel with others." We should go to our family members, classmates, neighbors, and fellow workers. We should go to our campus, our neighborhoods, our city, our nation, and to all nations. We should not just stay in one place; we should go. However, our going should be in line with God's will. In Acts 1:8, God revealed his plan for his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The rest of the book of Acts shows how the Holy Spirit worked in the disciples to accomplish this vision. God has a plan for world mission. God has a great vision to use each of us. As we participate in his work, we come to know his heart and become his partners and friends. When we know God's plan for our lives we cannot live for petty pleasure and comfort. We must go out according to God's will and do great things for God. Those who want to stay in one place become like a stagnant pond, or like the Dead Sea. Water flows into the Dead Sea, but does not flow out. Living things cannot grow there. On the other hand, the Sea of Galilee receives fresh water from the Jordan River and also allows water to flow out from it. Life flourishes in the fresh, flowing water. As we receive the grace of God, we should share it with others--not just in one place, but everywhere, including other countries.

Here we learn that sending missionaries is very important. Romans 10:14-15 says: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can

they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.'" Mother Barry's decision to go to Korea as a missionary changed Korea and the world. Dr. Samuel Lee's decision to come to America has changed America and the world. In recent conferences, many among us went forward to offer ourselves to God as short or long-term missionaries. Let's prayerfully consider this now. Is it God's plan for you to go as a missionary? Is the Holy Spirit saying, "go"? If so, we must respond.

Although going is the beginning point, "make disciples" is the main emphasis of the command. Who are disciples? Disciples are those who confess Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They are willing to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow him. Their goal is to become like Jesus in every way possible. All Christians are called to be Jesus' disciples. There are not two kinds of Christians: disciples and believers. In the Book of Acts, the word "disciple" refers to all believers (Ac 6:1-7; 9:19,26; 11:26; etc.).

What does it mean to "make disciples"? This is more than teaching a doctrine. It is reproducing the life of Christ in another person, who will in turn, reproduce in another person. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul mentions four generations of Jesus' disciples: himself, Timothy, reliable men, and others. Disciples produce disciples who produce disciples and so on. In this way the kingdom of God expands. Making disciples is the core of gospel ministry. Jesus made disciples. Without disciples, his ministry would have ended at his death. The command to make disciples comes from the Risen Christ, not from UBF. The Risen Christ wants to make disciples of all nations. This expresses God's love for the world. God wants to save the people of all nations by making disciples of Jesus Christ. How can we do this? Jesus told us to do two specific things.

First, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This refers to the act of water baptism. Let's think about this from the point of view of one being baptized, as well as the baptizer. For the baptized, it is a public confession of faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. It represents a decision to follow Jesus. This confession is not a mere ritual ceremony; it is a matter of life and death--as it was in ancient times and is now in Muslim countries. Baptism is "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The God of the Bible has revealed himself as a Triune God: three in one. All three persons participate in our salvation. The Triune God created the world. The Triune God gives birth to a new creation. The Triune God gives new life to a human soul. This is what water baptism symbolizes.

For baptizers, baptizing with water is receiving a new member into the body of Christ. It implies that the gospel has been preached effectively. Jesus' disciples must grasp the gospel message firmly and learn to share it effectively. It is also a commitment by baptizers to nurture new believers until they grow to maturity in Christ. This requires the formation of a Christian community focused on making disciples. The members have different gifts and different roles to play in the community. One performs the ceremony, one assists, one prepares the environment, others pray, and so on. As they all work together, with a common goal, even small things like serving a cup of cold water, become part of the disciple-making ministry.

Second, teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded. Jesus had already taught his disciples. Matthew has presented Jesus' five great discourses: The Sermon on the Mount (5-7) teaches Jesus' value system and how to grow in Christian character; Instructions on Discipleship (10) teach the nature of our relationship with Jesus and how we are to follow him; Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (13) reveal the reality of God's reign through his Messiah and his words, and how the kingdom grows in and through us; Instructions on Community Life (18) teach how to live together with Christ at the center; and the Olivet Discourse (24-24) reveals the signs that precede Jesus' Second Coming and how we should prepare for it. As Jesus had taught these things to his disciples, he now authorized them to teach others.

When we are going to teach others, we must first practice what we teach. Disciples learn more from their teachers' lives than from their words. In the end, they will imitate what their teacher practices, not what he says with his mouth. So those who teach must first practice what they teach. We must teach by example as well as with words of instruction.

There is a difference between teaching and "teaching them to obey." Teaching can refer to the mere impartation of knowledge. But "teaching them to obey," means helping them to honor Jesus' words as the words of God, and put them into practice. After instructing, we must observe how the disciples practice it. We must establish accountability

and learn to measure progress. We must help them to grow through obedience until they taste the deep joy of becoming more like Jesus. When they experience this rich blessing, they become willing to obey. They learn to teach themselves, and also begin to teach others.

Here, let's take a moment to reconcile the concept of making disciples with what we learned earlier this year in Galatians. Galatians taught us that we are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ, not by anything we do. We cannot add anything to what Jesus has done, but only receive it with faith. Why, then, should we engage in being and making disciples? It is because faith is not stagnant. Faith produces obedience (Ro 1:5). Moreover, as the love of Jesus grows in our hearts it compels us to obey Jesus gladly (Jn 14:23). When we obey Jesus' teaching our faith can grow. Without obedience we don't grow as disciples of Jesus. So we need discipleship training.

In America today, it seems hard to teach young people to obey. They seem rebellious toward all authorities. It is tempting to simply share the right information with them and then send them away, without follow up. Many are afraid to teach them to obey, thinking it is a violation of personal privacy. Many fear to talk about others' personal lives. But we must teach them to obey the words of Jesus. We must teach them to obey "everything" that he has commanded us. We cannot pick a few easy verses and ignore the harder teachings. We must teach everything Jesus requires.

To teach effectively, we must remember who Jesus is. Jesus is the Risen Christ who has all authority in heaven and on earth. His words have great authority. He is the Almighty, living God. His work is irresistible. The Holy Spirit applies his words to people. This gives us confidence that making disciples is possible in any context. The problem is our faith. When we challenge people by faith, believing that God will work, we can experience the power of God to raise disciples. Let's obey just what Jesus commanded us. In order to help and encourage us, Jesus gave us a great promise.

### III. Jesus' Promise (20b)

Look at verse 20b. "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Jesus is with his people both corporately and individually as we seek to follow him by faith. Jesus works through all the events of life to help us learn his truths. He is constantly at work through our relationships and our experiences. He brings our Bible teaching alive and applies it to the situations we are going through. Jesus protects us and gives us wisdom and power to do these things. It is through the Holy Spirit. We cannot carry out great mission by our own limited wisdom and strength. The Holy Spirit carries it out through us. So all we have to do is depend on God. It is possible to make disciples of all nations because Jesus promised to be with us always, to the very end of the age.

Jesus solved the fundamental problem of all people through his death and resurrection. Jesus is the Savior of the world and the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Jesus wants to save all peoples who are perishing under the power of sin and death. He wants us to be main characters in his world mission work. So Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all nations. Let's obey his command by faith and with much prayer.