

The Great Commission

Joining Jesus on His Mission

Thesis: We are a people who join Jesus on his mission, together with others, in our spheres of influence and in the nations.

Text: Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21; Luke 4:18-19; Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 4:19-20, 23-25; 9:35-38.

Intro:

As a part of our participation with The Send back in May, we committed to equip the body of Christ regarding *The Great Commission*. I am excited to talk about what Jesus says about his mission and our mission. And, I want to talk about what Jesus commissioned us to do and say (commissioned = called, authorized).

For some of you who grew up in the church or who have been around the church for a while, the phrase, *The Great Commission*, means something to you. You have a mental model or some meaning and assumptions about what Jesus meant that is based on your experience and your spiritual formation.

For those of you who are younger or who came to Christ later, you might have a different understanding of what is meant by *The Great Commission*.

So, I want to have a conversation about *The Great Commission*.

1. **What is *The Great Commission*?**
 - a. For many Christians, *The Great Commission* is what Jesus said to his disciples after his resurrection in Matthew 28:18-20.
 - b. *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, baptizing 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" (Matthew 28:18–20).*
2. **What does Jesus mean when he commissions his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations"?** (Matthew 28:19.)
 - a. **What comes to your mind when you hear, "go and make disciples" or fulfill *The Great Commission*?**
 - b. Please take a minute to pause and reflect. (Take 1 minute for silence and reflection.)
 - i. What came to your mind?

- ii. For some people, they default to a mental model or understanding that we are to go and make converts.
- iii. **But is making converts what Jesus meant for us to do? Is making converts what Jesus understood as his mission? Is making converts what God means by "the gospel"?**

Our plan today is to survey three passages, and then we will go back and look at those passages more closely.

1. **How do we understand our calling (commission): make converts or make disciples?** (Matthew 28:18-20.)
 - a. Matthew 22:37-39 is called *The Great Commandment*.
 - b. Matthew 28:18-20 for many believers is *The Great Commission*.
 - i. Note: Many missiologists now say that John 20:21 and Luke 4:18-19 along with Matthew 28:18-20 are *The Great Commission*.
 - c. What many believers make as the meaning of the phrase, *The Great Commission*, is to "make converts."
 - i. For some people, the assignment means helping people say the sinner's prayer so that they go to heaven when they die and have eternal life.
 - ii. For some: *The Great Commission* = make disciples = make converts.
 - iii. **But is that what the Lord Jesus is saying?**
 1. Jesus told us to go and make disciples or followers of Jesus.
 2. A disciple is an apprentice who becomes like the master in thoughts, beliefs, actions, and reactions.
2. **How did Jesus understand our calling (commissioning)?** (John 20:21.)
 - a. *As the Father sent me, so send I you (John 20:21).*
 - b. Jesus calls us and commissions as the Father called Jesus and commissioned Jesus.
 - c. Jesus calls us and commissions us to do and say as he does.
3. **How did Jesus understand his calling (commissioning)?** (Luke 4:18-19.)
 - a. Jesus came to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:19-20, 23-25; 9:35-38; Mark 1:14-15).
 - i. What is the kingdom of God?
 1. The Kingdom of God is wherever the will of God is done and wherever the king rules.
 - ii. What is the kingdom of God like?

1. *The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).*
 2. **Righteousness:** the justice or rightness of God is defined by Jesus, who is at the right hand of the Father (John 16:5-11).
 - a. *...righteousness comes from above, where I am with the Father, out of their sight and control (John 16:10).*
 - b. Jesus embodies and defines right thinking, believing, and acting.
 - c. We don't get to define what is good, what is true, or what is right.
 - d. We can't rely on self-righteousness.
 3. **Peace:** shalom (wholeness, well-being, safety, enough, human flourishing).
 - a. Shalom in the OT is the same as the kingdom of God in the NT.
 4. **Joy:** is closely related to gladness and happiness, although joy is **more a state of being than an emotion**. It is a result of choice. Joy is one of the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Having joy is part of the experience of being a Christian.
 - a. God created our brains and lives to operate on the fuel of joy, which comes from attachment to God and others.
 - b. The kingdom of God involves enjoying and celebrating what God enjoys and celebrates.
 - c. You can have joy even in the midst of the other big emotions like grief, because you are loved by God and by others and you experience that attachment in real time.
- b. According to Luke 4:18-19, the Spirit anointed and empowered Jesus to preach good news, deliver the captives, heal the sick, and encourage the discouraged.
 - c. According to Acts 10:38, Jesus understood his calling as *going about doing good and healing everyone under the power of the devil*.
 - d. **What comes to your mind when you hear, "go and make disciples" or fulfill *The Great Commission*?**
 - i. I asked you to take a moment and get present to what you were thinking, assuming, or meaning when you hear the phrase, "go and make disciples."
 - ii. What came to your mind?

- iii. For some people, they default to a mental model or understanding that we are to go and make converts.
- e. One can't understand what Jesus says to us in Matthew 28:18-20 unless one keeps it in the context of what Jesus says about his own calling, sending, and missioning.
 - i. **The Great Commission:** In the Old and New Testaments, God calls people, sends people, and authorizes them to co-mission with God; we are called to join God on his mission.
 - ii. God invites us to join with God on mission in the world. We are sent with the same mission as Jesus. The mission of Jesus was to announce and to demonstrate the kingdom of God. Jesus came preaching/announcing the good news of the kingdom of God. "That is my mission" (Luke 4:43 – Phillips New Testament in Modern English translation). "The essential message of Jesus can be summed up this way: the kingdom of God is available to everyone starting now. When Jesus refers to the kingdom of God, He doesn't mean something that happens after death, far off in heaven; He equates the kingdom of God with God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. So the kingdom of God is life as God intends it to be—life to the full, life in peace and justice, life in abundance and love." (The Voice translation notes – Luke 4) (Faithwalking Foundations Module 6 *The Mission of Jesus*).
- f. Being a disciple or follower of Jesus means in part that we are engaged in a process of spiritual formation where we are equipped with tools to gain freedom from wounds of our past, grow in emotional maturity, and live lives of purpose on mission with God.
 - i. The purpose of this transformation process is so that we increasingly follow the way of Jesus by serving the poor, the marginalized, and those in need, working for the common good; and restoring individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's intended design.
 - ii. This purpose is way bigger than simply being a convert or trying to get converts.

So, my hope today is to help shift our understanding of our mission. We are a people who join with Jesus on his mission, together with others, in our spheres of influence and in the nations. We don't treat people as projects. We are doing more than getting converts into heaven. We want people to know our God, to experience the presence and love of our God, and to follow our God now and for eternity.

How do we accomplish that mission?

1. We **incarnate the life of Jesus** in our daily life as a follower of Jesus and his way.
 - a. We live life by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. God lives in us. We are the body of Christ.
 - b. Through us, God is making himself known in our spheres of influence.
 - c. God embodies himself in and through our lives through our relationship with the Living God.
 - d. We ourselves are a lifelong follower and disciple of Jesus.
2. We **become a salt lick** that makes people thirsty for God. We are like salt in that we bring out the God-flavors in this world.
3. We **become a shining light**; our lives are illuminated with the light and life of the Lord. In one sense, **our lives become a movie trailer** of the kingdom of God and our King.

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 worshiped 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 [As you are going] and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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" (Matthew 28:16–20).

1. **God is looking for people who are available** to Jesus and who show up as God leads.
 - a. They went *to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go* (Matthew 28:16).
2. **God wants us to bring our all to him.**
 - a. *They worshipped him; but some doubted* (Matthew 28:17).
 - b. So, they brought their worship and their doubts to the Lord.
 - c. Come as you are and just come near.
3. **God has given Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth** (Matthew 28:18).
 - a. Jesus is the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth.
 - b. Jesus rules and reigns right now.
 - c. Jesus shares his authority and power with us.
4. **Jesus commissions and authorizes us to make disciples of all nations** (Matthew 28:19-20).
 - a. **Going:** as you are going about your normal, every day life, you carry out the will and purposes of God in your life and in your circles of influence. You live a life of communion with God and love yourself and others as God says (Matthew 22:37-39).

- b. **Baptizing:** we mark those who choose to follow Jesus.
 - c. **Teaching:** we equip those who choose to follow Jesus to follow the will and way of Jesus. That means we help the follow the moral and missional commands of the Lord.
5. **We fulfill our mission in partnership and fellowship with Jesus and others** (Matthew 28:20).
- a. Jesus promises that he is with you as an individual and with you who are on mission together.
 - b. We are not sent out as independent contractors.
 - c. We are sent out with others and with Jesus.

John 20:19-23

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:19–23).

1. After the resurrection of Jesus, the lives of the followers of Jesus were turned upside down (John 20:19).
 - a. Their Lord had been killed. The disciples assumed that they were next. They were responding to real and perceived threats.
 - b. Their Lord has just been raised from the dead on Resurrection Sunday. That will turn your world upside down.
 - c. This same resurrected Jesus now stood that evening in their midst without opening a door and says, "Peace." "Shalom."
 - d. Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. What a wild emotional ride.
2. Jesus makes himself known to his followers (John 20:20).
 - a. Jesus shows them his scars.
 - b. The disciples experienced overflowing joy in the presence of Jesus.
3. Jesus commissions his disciples (John 20:21).
 - a. *As the Father sent me, so send I you.*
4. Jesus empowers his disciples to do the mission of God in the power of Holy Spirit (John 20:22).
 - a. *He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*
5. Jesus authorizes his followers to share the power of forgiveness and restoration to right relationship with God (John 20:22).

Luke 4:14-19

14 *Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.* 15 *He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.* 16 *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.* 17 *The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me (1) to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me (2) to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and (3) recovery of sight for the blind, (4) to release the oppressed, 19 (5) to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:14–19).*

1. Jesus always did the will of his Father in what he said and did (John 5:19; 8:28).
2. Jesus lives a life of willing surrender to the Father and the Spirit.
 - a. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, for example (Luke 4:1).
 - b. Jesus lived in communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Luke 5:16).
 - c. Jesus ever lives to intercede (Hebrews 7:25).
3. Jesus was and is anointed by the Spirit of God to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of the kingdom of God.
 - a. Luke 4:15. *He taught in their synagogues.*
 - b. Matthew 4:23-25; 9:35-38.
4. Jesus did what he did as "the sent one."
 - a. *He has sent me (Luke 4:18).*
 - b. *As the Father sent me, so send I you (John 20:21).*
5. Jesus was and is anointed to meet every need that we have (Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-3).
 - a. Salvation.
 - b. Deliverance.
 - c. Healing.
 - d. Encouragement (healing of the heart for those who are oppressed).
6. Jesus empowers and authorizes (gives power and authority) to his disciples to do what he has been doing and to say what he has been saying (Luke 9:1-2; 10:1-2; Acts 1:8).
7. And, because Jesus abides in us, because the Father and Son make their home in us, and because the Holy Spirit of God dwells in us, we live and move and have our being in God.
 - a. We are sent and do and say like Jesus!!!
 - b. We are a people who join Jesus on his mission, together with others, in our spheres of influence and in the nations.
 - c. We both show and tell what the Kingdom of God is like.
 - d. And we participate in this great adventure with God and with others.
 - e. That is *The Great Commission*.

Application: here are some missional practices:

1. Stay in step with the Holy Spirit and do our part.

- a. God scatters seed lavishly and generously (Mark 4:3-8 Parable of Seed and Sower).
- b. *What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building (1 Corinthians 3:5–9).*

2. Help people along in their journey with God.

- a. Since God is already at work in the lives of people, we walk by the Spirit and stay in step with the Spirit, helping people take the next step in their journey.
- b. What is the Lord doing in the life of this person?
- c. How can I bless what the Lord is doing?

3. Look for ways to demonstrate and share the love of God.

- a. By going about doing good and pointing people to the love of God in Jesus. Illustration: give a candy bar to the cashier and tell them, "God loves you."
- b. By asking, "How can I pray for you?"
- c. By working for shalom (wholeness, well-being, human flourishing, safety) and sharing your hope in the Lord.
- d. By being curious about people and their story. People love to tell you about themselves and to share their stories.
- e. By listening to others.
- f. By expressing kindness.
- g. By being patient.
- h. By being intentional. Meet people. Build relationships.
- i. By practicing hospitality.
- j. By being aware and observant.
- k. By loving others well.