



**The Power Behind a Commission**

**Matthew 28:16-20**

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Read Matthew 28:16-20

One of the fun parts of putting together a worship service is picking out the picture for the bulletin. Larry or I will give Carla, who works in our office, our scripture passage and sermon title, and from that, she tries to guess what we will talk about and pick a picture that represents that theme.

Carla is really great at this, and can usually find an appropriate picture on the first try. This time around, however, we had a tough time finding the right picture. The first picture Carla picked portrayed verse 19 – the most famous and quoted verse in this section, affectionately called “The Great Commission:” “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

When I was 17, I had a profound encounter with Christ through a para-church organization (by para-church, I mean Christian organization not associated with a church), and their theme was this verse. Their goal was to tell everyone in the world about Jesus, and they even picked a year when they wanted to accomplish this goal.

The first picture Carla picked out focused on the Great Commission, and it was a beautiful collage of people from all nations. But as I thought about it, what gives the Great Commission power is not simply the words of the Great Commission, but what Jesus said before and after the Great Commission. My para-church organization did not focus on the words before and after the Great Commission...which I believe are just as important as the Great Commission.

What gives the Great Commission power is the person who said these words. Yes, of course, it is Jesus; but it is what Jesus says about himself that is

important: “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”  
THEREFORE, go and make disciples.

Whenever you see the word “therefore,” you need to figure out why “therefore” is there for. When you see or hear the word “therefore,” it means that what is coming after the word “therefore” depends on what was just said before “therefore.” The reason why we are to go and make disciples is because Jesus has been given all authority.  
Therefore, go....

So, I said this to Carla, and told her to find a picture that depicts Jesus’ authority. Well, that was really hard to do! Carla came back with 10 pictures of Jesus, and we finally settled on the one in your bulletin today. I think it is a powerful picture of Jesus’ authority.

The Great Commission has power because of the Person who said it.

For example: Imagine a Fortune 500 company. If a person who sorts the mail in the basement tells someone in middle management to pull the trigger on a multimillion dollar deal, everyone gathers at the water cooler for a good laugh. If the CEO of the company flies into town and walks in with the same order, the deal gets done yesterday.

It all comes down to authority.

Jesus proved His authority during his earthly life:  
He taught - people recognized his authority.  
He had authority over nature – he calmed storms.  
He had authority over sickness – he healed people.  
He had authority over unclean spirits - he cast out demons.  
He had the authority to forgive sins – and then he healed to prove it.  
He gave this authority to His disciples as he sent them out to minister and heal.  
He had authority over death – He rose from the dead.

Then Bible goes on and says things like this:  
“at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth. “ (Phil 2:9-10)

“all things were created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:15-17)

Jesus “is the head of every ruler and authority.” (Colossians 2:10)

Jesus “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him” (I Peter 3:22)  
And the Bible goes on and on about the authority of Jesus.

What is so amazing is that this Jesus, who has all authority over everything in heaven and earth, has given us a magnificent gift – Jesus has given us an adventure, a purpose. Go and make disciples. We are those who make, teach and baptize followers of Jesus Christ.

A pastor told this story about his very first church:

*During my student minister days, I served a small church where the highlight of the year, every year, for as many years as the elderly members of that church could remember was the annual Strawberry Festival. More work and planning and time and effort went into that Strawberry Festival than anything else in the entire life of the church. Every year. It always had been and it always would be -- world without end -- Amen!*

*At one council meeting of this church, I suggested that the council set aside some time to do a mini-retreat where we would explore some ways to reach out to our community. The community was changing and our membership had been in decline for some years.*

*"Oh, goodness," the president of the council said, "We wouldn't have time for that, pastor. We still have not recruited enough workers for the Strawberry Festival."*

*I want to share with you what I said from the pulpit of that church on the next Sunday. May I say in advance that I was, at that point in my ministry, filled with the zeal of the Lord and youthful enthusiasm? However, in terms of wisdom, I cringe at the stupidity of what came out of my mouth.*

*"There's more to the Christian life than Strawberry Festivals!"*

*There was no Strawberry Festival that year! For the first time in who knows how long there was no Strawberry Festival. I might as well have spoken against Christmas, Easter and Golden Anniversaries. It has been just about thirty years and although no one there knows my name anymore, they do remember the pastor "who killed the Strawberry Festival."*

The pastor telling this story realized what he had done wrong. That Strawberry Festival was the single most powerful event in the life of that church. The Great Commission isn't about killing the Strawberry Festivals. It's about taking the Strawberry Festivals and encouraging the people towards the task of drawing people to Jesus.

The Great Commission is about taking the ministries of the church – let's take some of ours: the patio sale, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July party, VBS, the Bible classes, Stephen Ministry, the Owl Express, the ushers and greeters, worship, dinners, and the list goes on and on – take the ministries of this church and find a way to draw people to Jesus through them.

For you see, Jesus, the one who has authority over all heaven and earth, has given us a purpose...to draw people to Jesus, to make disciples. And to make disciples, Jesus said, is teach them everything I have commanded you.

What did Jesus command? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Making disciples is teaching them what that looks like - to love God with all your heart, soul and mind – and to live it out.

And then Jesus goes on: Not only love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind, but love your neighbor as yourself. We make disciples by teaching them to obey Jesus' commands of loving your neighbor – which Jesus said is loving your enemies, feeding the hungry and thirsty, caring for the sick and needy and lonely.

Everything we do in this church should have the purpose of making disciples, because this purpose has been given to us by the One who has all authority. Take a look at our church's purpose statement (which is on the front of your bulletin, underneath the picture of Jesus with all authority) – to know Christ (which is when Jesus said: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind) and make him known through word and deed (This is the part where Jesus said love your neighbor as yourself).

We are given the ability to do this because of the next reason why the great commission is so powerful. Remember, it is powerful because of the One who spoke them (the Person), the one with all authority, and it's powerful because it gives the church its Purpose.

Here is the next reason why these words of scripture are so powerful. I introduce it with this true story.

Many of you know I have two cats, Barnes and Noble. Before I came here, I lived in New Jersey. One day in my house in NJ, I noticed my cats by the refrigerator, crouched down, looking intensely underneath it. Because I have lived with my cats for so long, I knew that such behavior means they had found something alive underneath that frig.

I soon learned it was a mouse because a day later it ran out from underneath the frig to a piece of furniture I had in the dining room. And that's where it camped out for several days along with my cats.

Well, I wasn't too happy about this situation, and I began to take precautionary measures. I began to wear shoes at all times. I constantly looked down on the floor. I turned on all the lights at night. And, I kept an eye on my cats.

After several days, the mouse (I think it was getting hungry) made another attempt to flee. My cats were right there, and began to bat at it with their paws. Well, the mouse was terrified, and stopped in the middle of my dining room and it was shaking. And I have to tell you, it was darn cute. It looked just like Mickey Mouse.

I had a heart. I got a jar, captured the mouse and released it outside, thereby depriving my cats of their new play toy.

I tell you that story because I was constantly aware of the presence of that mouse in my home; the presence of that mouse had power, and it affected how I thought and how I acted. You know what that is like, right? You've had a mouse or a snake or a scorpion or a bat in your house. It affects your every move and thought while it is in your house.

Jesus said, "Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." The Great Commission has power because of the constant presence of Christ.

Jesus Christ is present with us all the time. We are to be aware of that presence constantly, so it will affect how we act and think.

Did you know that there has never been a moment when Christ's presence was not felt in the world?

Listen to this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made..." (John 1:1-3).

The world has always known the presence of Christ.

When the earthly Jesus left this earth, he sent His Spirit so that He could be with us always. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of Christ. Our words and deeds alone don't have power; it is the presence of Christ in our lives.

We can go and do the Great Commission, to draw people to Jesus and to make disciples because of the power of the One who has all authority and the presence of the One who goes before us.

Here is your assignment this week: take a look at a ministry you do – whether it is in the church or outside it. Does it draw people to Jesus? If not, what changes can you make so it will?

I leave you with this last thought: There are 4 "alls" in this passage. Jesus has **all** authority given to him. We are to make disciples of **all** nations. We are to teach **all** that Jesus has commanded. And, Jesus is with us **all** the time.

We have been given a Person of great authority.

We have been given a Purpose to make disciples.

We have been given a Presence to be with us.

We are so blessed! May all that we do reflect this Person in our life.

Amen and amen.

### **Invitation to Offering**

I am in awe that the One who has all authority in heaven and earth works alongside us to make disciples. In order for the church to continue making disciples, it takes gifts and offerings...it takes money. That's why we have an

offering time in the middle of worship...so we can continue our purpose. Let us receive our gifts and offerings.