

## **The Making Disciples of All Nations, Part 1**

Matthew 28:6-18a

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I want to encourage you at this time, if you will, to take your Bible and open it to the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. We come to the last section of this great gospel. But I want you to understand something, this is not just the end, this is the climax. This is where Matthew has been going. This is where Christ has been moving through all of His life, to this point. This message is so important that I can say to you in all honesty that if you understand all there is about the rest of the gospel of Matthew and you don't understand this, you have missed the point. This is the climax of the gospel of Matthew. It ends on a very, very dramatic note. Everything, in a sense, has been foundational to this particular encounter with the truth of Christ that we find in verses 16 to 20.

I want you to look at your Bible as I read that passage to you.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke unto them saying, All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen.

Now, as I just said, this is the purpose articulated for which all of Matthew is written and for which Jesus Christ came. It is a passage that we must understand. And deep down in my heart, I only wish that every person in our church fellowship and every person in the church around the world could hear the truth of this passage that I want to share with you this Lord's day, and next. Not because I have so much to say, but because our Lord has so much to say and because I feel that so many people do not apparently understand the mission of the church. And when I say that, I mean people who are in the church. For many of the people who don't understand the mission of the church, there isn't even a thought along that line. They don't even give a consideration to what the mission of the church might be. They seemingly show up whenever it is convenient or even frequently to enjoy all that is provided for them, to take whatever they feel like taking, to leave whatever they feel like leaving. They seem to want to be involved in the church to the degree that it serves or meets particular needs in their own lives. And it somehow escapes both their understanding and even their curiosity as to what the mission of the church really is...much less are they wholeheartedly dedicated to the fulfillment of that mission.

Now if we were to survey people in the church, even in our church, and ask them what they felt the primary purpose of the church was, we might get some answers like this:

Some might suggest to us that the purpose of the church is fellowship. That the church is a place to make friends with good people, honest people, godly people who strengthen your life. It's a place to

provide activity for the family, enjoyable activity, meaningful activity. It's a place to enjoy music, the best of music, recreation, to cultivate relationships. It's sort of a place to hang out at until the Rapture. It's a place where love is cultivated and shared.

And all of that is certainly important because Jesus Himself said if we have love, all men will know that we are His disciples. But one step higher than that attitude would be the attitude of those who suggest that the mission of the church is teaching, that the primary objective of the church is to put out doctrine, to strengthen believers, to articulate theology, to give principles for practical Christian living, to train people for various responsibilities in the church, to instruct children and young people in obedience to the law of God with an objective of bringing them to maturity in Christ. And that certainly is a very important part of the church's ministry because those who are given to the church are given for the perfecting of the saints which occurs through the Word.

But even a step higher than that would be those people who suggest to us that the real purpose of the church is praise to God. That the church is really a praising community, a community of people who exalt God for who He is and what He has done. And obviously they suggest to us that this is the central activity of heaven and that is praise and adoration and honor and reverence and awe and homage being given eternally by all the saints redeemed and all the angels who are holy forever and ever and ever. Therefore if that's the primary responsibility of those in heaven, it certainly must be the primary responsibility of those on earth. In Revelation 4 and 5, we find that heaven is occupied with praise.

Now the fact is that fellowship is an absolute essential in the church. And teaching is equally essential and so is praise. But none of them and not all of them in combination are the mission of the church or the purpose of the church or the goal of the church or the objective of the church. None of them is why we are here. None of them.

You say, "Well then, what is the mission of the church?" Well, we have to start, first of all, with what is the motive of the church...what is our motive? The answer to that is very simple. We are what we are and we are to be what we are to be for the glory of God, is that not true? We have articulated that through the years that the primary greatest single unified motive of the church is the glory of God. In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 6, "All of this is to the praise of the glory of His grace." In verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of His glory." In verse 14, "Unto the praise of His glory." And over in chapter 3, "By Him is to be glory in the church."

The primary motive of the church is to glorify God. Jesus even came into the world for that purpose and gave us an example. He came to show us the Father's glory. He came to reveal the glory of the Father, John 1:14 says. He was the express image, the effulgence, the glory of God manifest, says Hebrews 1:3. So, Christ came into the world with one motive, basically, and that was to glorify God. And that motive has been passed on to the church. We are to give God glory, that is our reason for being. As the French would say, that's our *raison d'être*(?), that's our reason to be...to glorify God in terms of a motive.

But what about a mission? What is the mission that flows out of that motive? Now the answer will become clear to us as we take a look at redemptive history. Listen very carefully because this is, as I say, the ultimate message in Matthew because it is the climactic one. When man fell in sin in the garden, because of man's fall, all of the human race was condemned to death in hell. The whole human race died, in a sense, in the sin of Adam. But immediately, God set out to redeem man back

to Himself out of gracious love.

And if you remember the story, you will remember that when Adam fell in sin, and was very much aware of his sinfulness, and his alienation from God, he did not roam around the garden saying, "God, where are You? God, where are You?" It was God in Genesis 3:9 who came into the garden and said, "Adam, where are you?" And the intent of that is to let us know that it is God who initiates out of His own gracious love the saving work. Fallen and redeemed man, frankly, does not even seek after God, says Paul in Romans chapter 3. It is God who is the seeker. It is God who took the initiative to call man back out of gracious love. And from the first call in Genesis 3:9, "Adam, where are you?" to the last call in Revelation 22:17, "Come, the Spirit and the bride say come, let him who is athirst come and take of the water of life freely." From the first invitation to the last invitation of Scripture, and all in between, God is a God who longs to redeem fallen man to Himself. God has been and God continues and will continue to seek to redeem people and ultimately to redeem the whole fallen world for the purpose of giving Him glory. It glorifies God when sinners are saved. It glorifies God when the unredeemed and separated from Him are brought back by grace into fellowship and transformed and made into members of His family.

So important is this on God's heart that it even tells us in Scripture that He was in the world, 2 Corinthians 5:19, reconciling the world to Himself. God became a man. God invaded human history. God came into our world to do this which was the desire of His heart. And why was it His desire? Because God's supreme desire is to glorify Himself as the absolutely perfect God, He has an absolutely perfect right and an absolutely perfect reason to glorify Himself. The way in which He seeks to glorify Himself is to redeem sinful men. That is the single greatest act of holy God. That is why in 3:10 of Ephesians, it says the angels are in awe of God in His saving work as they look at the church. That is why Peter said, "This salvation angels desire to look into." Nothing glorifies God to the extent that the redeeming of a hell-bound, damned sinner does. And so, God desiring glory realized that the greatest glory given to Him by angels and men would come through the redemption of men set out to redeem man back. All men then become objects of God's seeking love.

You go all the way back to Genesis 12 and verse 3 and you read there that God's promise came to Abraham and said, "Out of Abraham's loins would come a nation, the nation Israel, of course, and through that nation all the families of the earth will be blessed." From the very beginning, God wanted to redeem all the families of the earth. It was never His intention to select and isolate Israel as if they were the only people that He cared about. Israel was never to be the only redeemed people, they were merely to be the missionary people to reach the world. In Isaiah 49:6, it says to Israel, "I will also give thee for a light to the nations that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth." God's desire was always to glorify Himself by reaching the lost around the world. That's why Paul in 2 Corinthians says, "We desire at any price to win you to Christ, that it might redound to the glory of God." In other words, every time you bring someone to Christ, you add another voice to the hallelujah chorus. You have another person who can now be to the praise of His glory.

So the motive, then, is to glorify God. And the mission that does that is to win men and women to the Savior. And as they come to know Him and their sins are forgiven, and they are transformed from death to life and darkness to light, God is glorified in the miracle of that transformation. The glory of God is manifest in His loving desire and in His power to redeem lost men out of the world. So God loves the world and thus seeks the world to Himself and to accomplish that, He sacrificed Himself. He paid the ultimate supreme price to do what He desired to do to fulfill His glory.

Now here's the point. Get it very clearly. Here's the point. The person who desires to glorify God, who wants to honor God's will and God's purpose and God's desire, must then love the lost world the way God loves the lost world and give his life for the sake of winning that lost world. That is the pattern. God loved a lost world and sought to win it to Himself for His own glory. Christ came into the world, loved a lost world and sought to win it to Himself for the Father's glory. We are sent into the world to love the lost world, to seek to win the lost world for the glory of God the Father. Our mission is the same mission Christ had, it's the same mission God the Father had...no different...identical.

When Jesus came into the world, He wanted to glorify the Father. In John 17, this is outlined for us so beautifully, turn to it for just a moment. In John 17 and verse 3, it says, "And this is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." And then Jesus said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." That was His mission. I came to glorify You. And how? To reconcile man back for that is the single greatest way that God is glorified. That's what Christ came for. That's why He came. I have glorified You. How did You do that? "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to...what?...save that which was lost." Yes, Christ came to glorify God. How did He do that? By seeking and saving that which was lost.

Now that is precisely, beloved, that is precisely what the mission of the church is. It's no different because we are an extension of God the Father. We are an extension of the ministry of God the Father. His desire to be glorified by the salvation of lost sinners, Christ's desire to glorify the sinner through the salvation of lost sinners, our desire to glorify the Father through the salvation of lost sinners, that is our purpose.

And in John 17, it comes through so very, very clearly. He says in verse 6, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world." I told them about You, He said. I conveyed to them Your desire, Your motive, Your mission. "Thine they were and Thou gavest them to Me and they have kept Thy word. They have known that all things whatever Thou hast given Me are from Thee." In other words, they know that I'm doing what You desire to be done. You see the flow? He says to the Father, "Father, I've glorified You, I've told them exactly what Your intention is, what Your mission is, they've gotten it. They understand it. They've kept Your word." Verse 8, "I have given unto them the words which You gave Me. They have received them. They have known surely that I came out from Thee and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."

In other words, the Savior is saying they understand the mission. They understand why You sent Me into the world. And verse 9, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, for they're Thine." We belong to God. We're in a link with the same mission that the Father had.

Now drop down to verse 14. "I have given them Thy word and the world has hated them because they're not of the world, even as I'm not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world, sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy word is truth." He says, "Look, Father, I know what Your motive is to be glorified. I know what Your mission is to reach the lost. I came into the world with the same motive and the same mission, and I passed it on to these disciples. They understand Your word. They understand I was sent from You. They understand the mission. They know why I'm here. They know what they're to do. And I ask, O God, three things, that they may follow Your word, that they may be kept from the evil one and that they may be pure. That's what I pray for them."

And then verse 18 is the climax. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world," underline the word "as." That is the dominant idea here that conveys the intent. What do you mean by that? "As you sent Me." Well, why did He send You? "To glorify Himself through winning lost men and women to salvation." "As You have sent Me into the world, the unredeemed world to win men and women, even so have I also sent them into the world." It's the same thing.

Beloved, we have no different mission in the world than the incarnate Jesus Christ had to fulfill the heart of God in winning the lost. That is our mission...to glorify God by bringing salvation to lost men and women. What then is the church to be doing? What then is the church's mission, objective goal and priority? Is it fellowship? Listen, if God wanted us just to exist for fellowship, we ought to be saved and taken instantly to heaven where fellowship is perfect, where there is nothing to violate fellowship, and nothing to break fellowship and everything to stimulate fellowship, and perfect harmony, and perfect order, and perfect love, and perfect communion and perfect communication. No, if fellowship was our purpose, God would have taken us to heaven.

Teaching? If our purpose is that we may know doctrine and know knowledge, the best thing God could do is take us immediately to heaven where we would know as we are known instantaneously and all teaching ceases because everybody knows everything they need to know. No. If the purpose of the church was teaching, we'd be gone.

Well, what about praise? If God wanted perfect praise out of His church, He'd take them to heaven, too, because that's where perfect praise occurs. Our praise here is muddled up, just like our teaching is. If all God wanted was fellowship, then let's get to heaven and have perfect fellowship. If all God wants is that we have understanding and knowledge of His Word, then let's get to heaven and get perfect knowledge and not have to listen to a whole lot of teachers and try to figure out who's right. If all God wants out of us is praise, then let's get up there with the angelic chorus and the redeemed of the ages and let's get on with our eternal praise.

The point is this, and I want you to get it, there is only one reason we are here and one reason alone, and that is that we may seek and save those who are lost. It is as the Father sent the Son that the Son sends us. If the Father wanted fellowship with the Son, He would have kept Him in heaven. If the Father wanted perfect knowledge with the Son, He would have kept Him in heaven. If the Father wanted the perfect praise that was His, He would have kept Him in heaven. He wouldn't need to send Him to earth. But if the Father wanted to redeem fallen men, He had to send Him to this earth. That's the only reason we're here. There is no other reason.

Now I hope that simplifies it for you. That's it. So when you evaluate your Christian commitment and you evaluate how you're using your Christian life, ask yourself one question: am I involved in winning lost men and women to Jesus Christ? Is that where my time and energy and effort and talent and money is going? To do that? That's the only reason you're here.

So unless you're committed to the fact that we are here for the responsibility of winning a lost world to Jesus Christ, then you better reexamine why you are existing.

Fellowship, teaching, praise are not the mission of the church. They're part of the preparation and the training for the mission. I mean, a great athlete does a lot of things in training, but the training is

not to be confused with the competing and the winning. It is not to be confused with running the race. All the exercise and preparation you go through in your education is not to be confused with succeeding in your profession. And when the church meets for fellowship, teaching and praise, all that is only preparation for the running of the race and winning of lost people to Christ. That's why we're here, that is it.

Now, to understand that is to be able to come to the passage in Matthew chapter 28 and I call your attention back to it, with understanding. Here is the purpose of the church. So simply stated. Everything Christ did when He was here on earth was for this, everything we're to do is for this, and what is it? Verse 19, and the verb should read, "Go ye therefore and MAKE disciples." That's all I want you to grasp for a moment. That's the main verb in the last two verses, MAKE disciples..MAKE disciples. That's our calling. That's our calling. That's why we're here. And the only reason why we're here. We are left here to make disciples...to bring people to Christ...to cause people to become followers of the Savior...to seek and to save those that are lost.

The verb "make disciples," matheteusate(?) is an imperative command. From a verb matheteuo, the noun form is mathetes, we get the word "disciple" or "learner" from that. It means one who is a learner, one who follows, to make a disciple of to make a learner of, to make a follower of. We are to make followers of Christ, disciples of Christ, learners of Christ out of men. We are to bring them to Christ. It is a common term. It is a term used even in the Jewish culture in Matthew 13:52 to describe the training process of a scribe. It speaks about a person coming to one and being trained by that one, learning from that one.

Jesus did it. In Matthew 27:57 it says, "Joseph was discipled by Jesus." He was one who followed Jesus, who knew Jesus Christ by faith and walked after His precepts. In John 4, a very important passage, verse 1 gives us insight into the preoccupation of Jesus' ministry. "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John." Jesus made and baptized disciples. That's His ministry. Even though matheteusateis not used in John 4:1, the expression there with the noun mathetes and the verb form poieo, to do or to make, makes the same point. Jesus makes disciples. Jesus is involved in bringing to Himself men and women to follow Him. Its reference is to initially salvation, as we shall see in next week's study. And then to all that follows that.

This also became the work of the early church. In Acts 14:21, it says that the Apostles went out into the church and basically made disciples...brought people to follow Jesus. That's why we're here. Our motive, our motive is not to get a reward for what we've done, our motive isn't to be the number one soul winner in our church, our motive isn't to be able to rack up certain names that we've led to Christ and announce them to other people. Our motive is to glorify God, but our mission is to win the lost to Jesus Christ. This purpose and this mission is so absolutely clear, and I want you to listen carefully to this, that it isn't even repeated in the book of Acts. It isn't even repeated. There is no command after Matthew, and of course the great commission is repeated in all the four gospels, but after this, there is no repetition of this command. We are to make disciples.

We thank God for fellowship, for teaching, for praise. But that's not our goal. And I fear, beloved, that many of you have set that aside. I mean, there are so many opportunities to reach a lost world and there are so many lost in the world, so many small groups of people in remote corners, so many large nations that are lost, so many people across our country that are unreached and we stand in tremendous capability at this church to reach a world for Christ that we are constrained by the lack of

commitment of so many people...and even of our ourselves. We are bogged down. We are preoccupied with the inane.

We have in our society now an absolute fascination with trivia and people are playing games, Trivial Pursuit, there's even a game out called "Bible Trivia." May I be so bold as to say there is no such thing? We are bogged down in trivialities and junk and useless trivia of the world while people near and far do not know the saving message which is the only reason we're even around. Otherwise we might as well be in heaven. People are preoccupied with that which is absolutely useless. Their time, their thoughts, their energies, their money goes for all the junk imaginable. My wife and I always comment about how many stores there are that sell stuff nobody needs, and stuff you couldn't use...you just put it someplace. It doesn't do anything at all. Trivia.

We have resources in this church that are staggering. We figured out in our elders' meeting the other night that if you just took sort of an average figure and took the equity that people in this church have in their homes and took what might be an average yearly salary, and combined those things together, that would be the equity in your home and your annual salary this year alone, you are responsible for the stewardship of somewhere between 500 and 900 million dollars. And here we come and say, "Please, folks, we need 250 thousand dollars to meet our needs," and we haven't even started to try to reach a world that is crying out to us for ministry, for missionaries, for tapes, for radio programs, for everything that we, in a sense, can provide if we can ever get off dead center and turn loose of some of the junk of our lives and translate it into that which can accomplish the reason we're here.

I mean, there are people who will spend thousands of dollars to travel half way around the world to shop and wouldn't spend half that much to send around the world to reach somebody with the gospel. I don't think there's a church that I know of anywhere that has a greater opportunity to reach the world than we do. We have that opportunity through every means possible, educationally, in terms of media, it's all there, in terms of man-power. Look at the people and look how well educated biblically our people are and how much you understand about the Word of God and the things of God and the life of God, what an incredible resource. Not only do we have between 500 and 900 million dollars in money assets, potentially, but look at the man power and the capability and the wisdom and the gifts and the talents. But what happens with it? We are crippled by the indulgent mentality of a self-centered society into which most Christians have bought. And instead of thinking, "How can I sell my house and get a smaller one, take my equity and invest it in the winning of souls?" we're thinking, "How can I get more money in my house and get a bigger one?" I mean, that's just so basic.

But it's frightening. Sam Ericcson suggested to me that maybe the Lord hasn't given us more money is because we're such poor stewards of what He's given us already. I mean, where...where are we really setting the priorities? Sam was sharing with me that he has a technique that he always uses when people want counseling. He says people will call him and say, "Well, I have a spiritual problem, I have a burden I want to talk to you..." he's an elder in his church, chairman of the elders, and he says, I always tell them the same thing, "I'd be happy to talk with you, bring your checkbook." And people will say, "My checkbook?" "Yes, your checkbook. I want to go over your checkbook with you first before we talk about anything else."

Well, the standard answer is, "Why do you want to do that?" And his answer is, "I want to see where your heart is." Because Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is." I don't think he does a lot of counseling. Where's your heart? You want to know where your heart is? Look at

your checkbook, look around your house. People think that they need to store up all their money for the future, they need to lay it all away, you know, build up all their assets, make all their investments, hoard all they possibly can with the goal in mind of security in the future. That is Satan's lie to this generation of Christians.

Now I'm not saying you should be foolish. What I am saying is there's a world to be won for Christ and who cares how comfortable it is for us? Misplaced priorities.

Now after you're done checking through your checkbook, check through your calendar and find out where you're spending your time. And what occupies your mind. Well, we're great at fellowship, fellowship stimulates us. We're great at teaching, teaching sort of entertains us and assists us in growth. And we're great at praise, that gives expression, but we're sure not so good at sacrificial living or sacrificial giving to reach the lost. And, friends, I'm trying to say what Jesus said and what the Scripture indicates is that that's the only reason we're here. Every other purpose could be better accomplished in heaven. Now we've got to come to grips with this. The sad part is most Christians are content with the trivia of this life to amass the junk of this life to pad their own case, fill up their lives with all the accessories they can possibly enjoy while the world is going to hell and we're not there to reach them.

S.D. Gordon has written a lot of little books years ago called Quiet Talks, Quiet Talks on Service, Quiet Talks on Prayer, I read them as a young man. One of them is called Quiet Talks on World Winners and in it he has a marvelous, marvelous illustration. He says a group of people were preparing for an ascent to the top of Mount Blanc in France in the Swiss Alps. On the evening before the climb, a French guide outlined the prerequisite for success. He said this, "You will only reach the top by taking just the necessary equipment for climbing and leaving behind all unnecessary accessories. It's a difficult climb."

A young Englishman disagreed and proceeded along the following pattern. In the morning he showed up and he had a rather heavy brightly colored blanket, some large pieces of cheese, a bottle of wine, a couple of cameras and several lenses hanging around his neck. And also some bars of chocolate. The guide said, "You'll never make it with that. You can only take the bare necessities to make the climb." But strong willed as he was, he set off on his own in front of the group to prove to them he could do it.

The group then followed under the direction of the guide with just the bare necessities. And on the way up toward the summit of Mount Blanc, they began to notice certain things left behind. First a brightly colored blanket, then some pieces of cheese, a bottle of wine, camera equipment and some chocolate bars. Finally when they reached the top, they discovered that he was there...having jettisoned everything in the process.

S.D. Gordon then makes this application to the Christian life. "So many people when they find that they can't make it to the top with all their accessories, let the top go and pitch their tent in the plain and the plain is very full of tents." You understand that? It is very full of tents. And the question comes to you and to me is: do we understand why we exist? Can we say to the Savior, "I know why the Father sent You into the world to glorify Him by winning the lost...I know why You send me into the world to glorify Him by winning the lost...but You don't understand, I can make it with all my accessories." No, it's not so. "Too many people," said S.D. Gordon, "let the top go and pitch their tent in the plain."

Now what is necessary for effective evangelism. If we're going to make disciples of all nations, if we're going to reach the world, what is necessary? First, what I've given you in this introduction must be understood. But now I want you to look at five explicit or implicit elements. We're only going to examine two of them, and the rest next time. These are in the text of Matthew 28:16 to 20 and they are those things which are essential to effective fulfillment of the purpose for which the church exists: availability, worship, submission, obedience, and power.

First of all, let's look at availability. This is implied in verse 16 in a very, very wonderful way. By the way, someone once said, "The greatest ability is availability." I like that. It doesn't matter how talented you are if you're not available. The greatest ability is availability. And we see that here. There's going to be a great commissioning on this day and they're going to be people sent out into all the world with the promise of the presence and the power of the living Christ. But if you weren't there, you weren't going to be a part of that. The ones who were available were the ones who received the privilege.

Verse 16, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." We'll stop at that point. Here's the availability. The word "then" should better be translated "so". It's a simple connective reflecting the response of the believers to Jesus' instruction. Back in chapter 26 verse 32, He said, "When I'm raised from the dead, I'll go before you into Galilee." After He was raised from the dead, notice verse 7 of chapter 28, "The angel said to the women, He goes before you into Galilee, there you will see Him." When Jesus appeared to those same women later on in verse 10, Jesus said to them, "Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see Me."

In other words, before and after the resurrection, Jesus said He would meet with His disciples in Galilee. He was calling together a great conclave there for the purpose of commissioning them to reach the world. They were told then before His death and after His resurrection that they were to be there. And no doubt the word spread beyond the disciples to all the others who believed in Jesus Christ and they were all gathered, as we shall see, on that mountain on that appointed day.

Now we have no specific knowledge as to how Jesus communicated to them the time and the place...what day and what mountain. We don't know, it just says here that they went away into Galilee into THE mountain, the Greek text says, the specific mountain which Jesus had Himself appointed. The verb form indicating there that it was by His own discretion and His own will that He appointed a certain mountain to meet them. We don't know how that message was conveyed to them, but it was.

Now when did this happen? Obviously it was after His resurrection. Obviously, the day of His resurrection, He met the women, He went on the road to Emmaus, saw a couple of other disciples, saw the disciples that night in the upper room, saw them eight days later again in the upper room. So it would be at least after that eighth day. Then after that eighth day, when the disciples had seen Him, they would need a certain amount of time to journey north into Galilee, maybe a week. When they come into Galilee in John 21, we see them fishing. And seems that they have actually gone back to their old profession. They were in a boat that may well have been Peter's own boat, as if he were taking up his old trade, not really knowing what to expect in the future from the Lord, even though he had been told to go to Galilee and wait for the Lord to come.

So, the disciples had time to go back, to sort of reestablish their fishing enterprise. They were down there in the boat. You remember Jesus came, they couldn't catch anything. Jesus showed them that He had control over the fish. Called them to the shore, asked Peter if he loved Him three times, then commissioned them to serve and feed His sheep. So the Lord has had all of these several meetings. The first eight days in Jerusalem, maybe a week to go north, that would put it maybe at 15 days, maybe three or four days to sort of settle into the fishing, maybe it's 20 days later by the time this happens.

Now we know in Acts 1:3 it says that Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs over a period of 40 days. So it's somewhere between 20 days maybe and 40 days that this occurs. It wouldn't be at the end of the 40 because the last appearance was at the Mount of Olives where He ascended. And the Mount of Olives is outside Jerusalem, they would have had to have another few days to get back there. So maybe somewhere between 20 and 35 days after His resurrection, but still with time to return to Galilee and see Him ascend, Jesus then calls together this group of people for this very special commissioning.

Now you say, "What group of people is this specifically?" I believe it is the group of people indicated in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 6 and 7 where it says, "Five hundred plus brethren saw Him at one time." Here is the gathering in Galilee with the 500 plus...that has been the consistent view of biblical teachers throughout the years. And I see that as being very accurate.

Now it only tells us in verse 16 that the eleven disciples were there because, of course, they were central to the issue. They used to be called the "Twelve" but with the defection, apostasy and death of Judas who went to his own place, as Acts 1:25 says, they were now reduced to eleven and they become known as the "eleven." But this sighting of Jesus here was not limited to them because in chapter 28 verse 7, the angel said to the women, "He goes before you into Galilee, there shall you see Him. Lo, I have told you." So it was for the eleven, it was for the women and presumably it was for all the other believers and disciples in Galilee who were to be commissioned for this responsibility of reaching the world, the 500 at one time who saw Him as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:6 and 7.

There's no reason for Jesus to go all the way to Galilee to have a meeting with just the eleven disciples, He had met them twice in Jerusalem. If He wanted another meeting with them, He could have done it. The command here given to go and make disciples of all nations doesn't know any hierarchy, that's a command given to everybody, whether you're an apostle or not, it fits all those who love and follow Jesus Christ. And certainly our Lord would have wanted to give this commission to the largest group possible and the largest group possible would be the 500 gathered in Galilee because there were so many more believers in Galilee than in Jerusalem.

You say, "How do you know that?" Because in Acts chapter 1 verse 15, when the believers in Jerusalem met to wait for the Holy Spirit, there were only 120 of them in the upper room. The number of disciples in Jerusalem was much smaller, the hostility was much greater and the dominance of Christ's ministry had occurred in Galilee where the hearts were more open. He came in Matthew 4 as a light to the Gentiles, to the Galilean area known as Galilee of the Gentiles. He came to that region first of all to present His message. And so the bulk of believers were there. Also, Galilee would be a fitting place, not only because of the number of believers but because of the seclusion of it, away from the hostility of Jerusalem and because there could be so easily found a place where they could have privacy on the many hillsides around the sea. So it provided the largest group of disciples, the

greatest seclusion, the greatest safety and the right setting because it was a place where many nations lived surrounding it, the right setting to tell people to go to reach all those nations with the gospel.

And so, the eleven are there and I believe the women were there and I believe all the rest of the disciples of Jesus who believed in Him in the Galilee region were there also. And they were in the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. We don't know what mountain it was. It may have been the Mount of Transfiguration, it may have been that the mount of glory became the mount of resurrection and the mount of commissioning. It may have been the mount where He taught the Sermon on the Mount. It may have been the mountain where He fed the crowd, or the mountain that He went to so often to pray. Could have been any mountain. We really don't know. But it becomes a sacred mountain because of what happens here as over 500 of them with all their weaknesses and confusion and doubts and misgivings and fears and questions and bewilderments are gathered together. They're not the greatest people in the world, they're not the most capable or the most brilliant, they're not the most experienced, but they are there and that is to be commended. They are available. And that's what I love about this verse. That means "ready for service."

Everything at this point focuses on the fact that they were there. Jesus said be there, and they were there. They're reminiscent of the availability of Isaiah who after the vision of God in chapter 6 verses 1 to 7 says, "Here am I, Lord, send me. I may not be the best, I'm a man with a dirty mouth, but I don't see anybody else volunteering, I think Your choices are limited. Here am I, send me." They were not the great and the noble of the world but they were the available and that's all God ever wants. And, beloved, may I say to you this? That you will never begin in your own life to fulfill the reason you're not in heaven if you're not, to begin with, available. And by that I mean your time and your talent and your gifts and your finances and your resources are set in availability before the Lord to be used as He would desire for the purpose which He has called you to fulfill. Because they were there, they were commissioned. Because they were there, they met Christ. Because they were there, they received a promise of presence and power.

You see, just being there was critical. You know, little people with puny plans never show up at great events, they're too busy with trivia. Church for them is a whimsical thing. The place of the Word, the place of prayer, the assembly of the people of God is negotiable to them. It doesn't matter that the Bible says, "Forsake it not," that doesn't matter to them. And the problem with them is not that they don't go to reach the world, the problem is they don't even come to get their orders. I guess it's part of the plight of every preacher to realize, every time he comes into a pulpit like I do, I have a message that's not only from the Bible to the people, but comes from my heart. I know in the back of my mind that there are many people who aren't going to hear that message because they're not here. They're just not here. And as I believe in my heart that every passage in the Word of God is vitally important, I look at Christian people even in our church who have big gaps in their understanding of the Word of God because they're not here.

I was so thrilled the other day to have someone come up to me, a young man that I have a great deal of respect for, and he said to me, "I want you to know that I've heard every message you've preached in your entire series in Matthew. I've never missed one." Well, I suppose that would be a preacher's dream, not because the preacher wants the people to like what he says but because he understands how important it is that they understand the Word of God. These people were available. They were there. You have to ask yourself that question to begin with. I mean, are you even in the place where you're getting the orders? Are you available? Are you willing to say no to whatever you

possess and whatever time you think is yours if the Lord says it's His? I've really been searching my own heart on this. And I trust you will, as well.

There's a second principle that I just want to mention, it doesn't need to be elucidated at great length, and that is the attitude of worship that we see in verse 17. The first prerequisite or element in fulfilling this commission to make disciples is to be available, the second is to worship. And this is a question of focus. It's a question of focus. It says in verse 17, and this is absolutely marvelous the way this verse appears, "And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him but some doubted." I love that. I think that's so honest.

And when they saw Him...He appeared all of a sudden in the supernatural way in which He could transfer Himself from one place to another. He appeared and in an instant everyone saw Him in that supernatural appearance and it created an instantly overwhelming effect and they worshiped Him...proskuneo, to prostrate oneself in adoring worship. The risen Christ commanded their worship. They weren't worshiping Him as some human dignitary, they weren't worshiping Him as some earthly king, they were worshiping Him as God, for it had been affirmed that He was indeed God, the Son of God. Even in His death, did not the centurion say, "Truly, this was the Son of God"? Did not Thomas say, "My Lord and My God," as recorded in the twentieth chapter of John? This is more than homage to an earthly king. This is honor for God Himself in human flesh. They fall in adoring worship.

They had worshiped once earlier, it's referred to one other time that the disciples actually worshiped Him and that was in Matthew 14:33 when He had walked on the water and they knew He had to be the supernatural God Himself who controls the elements. But now their awe is even greater because He is risen from the dead. Not only is He a miracle worker but He is the one who has conquered death and they have seen Him and touched Him. Chapter 28 verse 9, "The women held His feet and the disciples touched His body and He was with them." He went out of the grave right through the stone, He came in the room right through the wall. And yet He was able to be touched and they knew they were dealing with a divine glorious supernatural person. And so when He appeared, they worshiped Him.

And then I love this note, "But some doubted." You say, "Matthew, you shouldn't put that in there, we're trying to make a case for the validity of the resurrection, why would you do that?" And that again is a reminder to us of the transparent honesty of the biblical writer who is not trying to contrive a believable story by reporting it in a selective way. He's not collecting evidence that's only going to make his case. The integrity of this is a great proof of the truthfulness of it. If men were trying to falsify and contrive a message about a resurrection, they wouldn't throw in the very climactic point "but some doubted," unless it was true. And it was true, so it's included. And that's the integrity of Scripture.

And we ask ourselves, first of all, what kind of doubt was this? Well, some suggest that the doubters were the eleven because it says "some doubted" and the some must go back to verse 16, the eleven disciples who were there. Well, it possibly could be that some doubted. It doesn't say that some doubted that Jesus was alive or that they doubted that He was raised from the dead. The indication is when they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted that it was Him. It wasn't so much necessarily a question of the resurrection issue but the doubt was that this was really Him. That could have happened among the disciples. Some of them may not have been able to clearly see His face, some of Him because He was appearing now in resurrection glory and maybe revealing Himself in a way different than they had seen Him in the upper room were really unable to be certain

and some of them were a little bit more hesitant to affirm this until they had surer evidence.

But on the other hand, if the women were there and including...included a group of say 489 plus the eleven, it could have been any of them. And keep this in mind, apart from the women and the disciples, none of those other people had ever seen Him after His resurrection. So this is the first time for them. So we're not surprised that now they're going to have an experience they've never had. There's a group that's so large, 500 people, that not everybody's going to be in the front of the group. Christ appears to them, they're not sure that it's Him. Maybe some of the disciples are not quite sure yet.

You say, "Well, how could they not be sure if He was there in their presence?" The answer comes in a very wonderful way at the beginning of verse 18, and it says, "And Jesus," aorist active participle, "came nearer, or approaching," which indicates to us the probable cause for their doubt, that Jesus in His appearance appeared at a distance. And it wasn't until He came near them and began to speak that those who doubted would have their doubt erased. So the doubts possible could have come from those who were disciples but as yet could not be sure that this was Jesus because He was afar off. Or it could have come from those who had never ever seen Him in resurrection glory and it wasn't for them either until He was near that they could identify Him as the one they knew to be Jesus Christ.

But it's so lovely and so beautiful that the writer includes this because it's so natural and it's so true and it's so uncontrived and it's such a convincing indicator of the validity of the scene itself. So at first they doubted, but as He came near, all doubt was dispelled. Doubting the Son of God and worshipping the Son of God is mentioned in the same breath on one other incident that I mentioned earlier in Matthew 14 when Jesus walked on the water. It says when He finally came to the boat after walking on the water and bringing Peter along with Him, it says they worshiped Him. But He said to them, "O ye of little faith, why do you doubt?" It's the same thing. Seen at a distance, they doubted. When He came near, they believed and they worshiped. And those people who at this particular point initially doubted, no doubt had their doubt erased as Jesus drew near. Their doubt was turned to confident faith and erased. And they no doubt felt ashamed, as every doubter does, when the vapor of doubt has been driven away by the shining Son of the living God.

But I want you to see this. They worshiped. Eventually I believe all of them did. They worshiped. Now, friends, that is essential. We're talking about reaching a lost world. We're not talking about just everybody running out the door and going on down the street and doing everything you can. What we're saying is that there are some things that are foundational. There is an attitude that says "I am available, Lord, whatever You want me to do, I will do that." I can remember on a highway as a kid, about 17 or 18 years old, lying on the highway, just thrown out of a car going 75 miles an hour and sliding a hundred and ten or fifteen yards on my back and still being alive and lying on the side of a road and out of my heart came this cry to God, "O God, I know that You control my life, thank You for saving my life, and whatever You want me to be, that's what I'll be, I'm available." Pray God that it doesn't have to come to that point for many of you. For me it did. But God is after an available heart where you're there at the appointed place at the appointed time to hear the orders from the one who is going to give them.

And the second thing is a worshiping heart, and what that means is focus. And again we're back to this whole idea of where's your focus? Worship simply means to be intent on grasping Christ. The women fell down and held His feet. These people fell down prostrate before Him, and believe me,

when they saw the risen Jesus Christ on that mountain that day, nothing else in their world made any difference to them. It ceased to matter to them where they lived and what they drove and how they looked and so forth and so on. What mattered to them was they had seen the living Christ and this group of people, along with the 120 more of them down in Jerusalem, literally turned the world upside down and out of that small group of witnesses of Christ's resurrection and Christ's Spirit coming, there is a worldwide faith in Jesus Christ to this day of which you and I are inheritors. And it didn't happen because of half-committed people, it happened because people worshiped Christ in the sense that they had undivided allegiance and devotion to Him in which everything else paled into insignificance.

When we worship the Lord Jesus Christ, we put ourselves in the place where we are available and we are able. The whole heart set on Christ, the whole affection set on Christ, the whole mind set on Christ. All the goals are set on Christ. He is all in all, He fills our thought and our intention. And we spend our days and our nights thinking not how can we make it better for ourselves, but how can we exalt His blessed name, not how can we be more comfortable as Christians but how can we win the lost no matter how discomfoting it is to us.

So, where's your focus? Are you available? Are you a worshiper? And by that I don't mean stained glass windows and organ music and show up on Sunday, what I mean is that you focus your whole intent and purpose in life on Christ. I mean, it's basic. It means being controlled by the Holy Spirit who is the only one who can cause you to call Jesus Lord, 1 Corinthians 12:3 says. My life is controlled by the Spirit, all my assets, all my possessions, all my time, all my energy, all my talent, all my gifts. It not only means I'm controlled by the Spirit but it means I'm centered on the Word because the Word is where Christ is seen. You gaze at His glory in the Word.

In Psalm 1 it says "A fruit bearing Christian, the one whose tree is planted by the river of waters whose fruit is born in its season, is the one who meditates on the Word day and night." The Christ-centered life, the worshiping life is a life that is yielded to the Spirit of God and is centered on the Word of God and consequently it is cleansed from sin. "Search me, O God, and know me, try me and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting," says Psalm 139:23 and 24. And David cried out in Psalm 51, "Cleanse me, purge me, wash me, make me clean." And then he said, "Then I shall open my lips." In other words, I'm not going to even begin to try to tell others about you until my own life is right. And so a worshiping life means a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, a life centered on the Word of God, a life cleansed from sin.

And it's that kind of true worshiper that gets his focus right, that starts to junk the cheese and the wine and the cameras and the chocolate and says I'm not going to let the top go, and I'm not going to pitch my tent in the plain, I'm going to strip myself of whatever I need to strip myself of to get to the top and maximize all that I can be for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ.

There's a third one I just want to mention it but I'm going to talk about it next week. And it's the third of the five and it is submission. This is another attitude. In verse 18, Jesus said, "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth." What did He mean by that? He meant, "I'm in control." And the reason He said that was to create in the mind of His disciples an attitude of submission. If He's in charge, we better listen, we better respond. The first three then, beloved, are attitudes. The first three necessary elements to be a disciple maker are attitudes. It is the attitude of availability. It is the attitude of worship. It is the attitude of submission that says whatever He commands, I will do. It is not negotiable, it is not option...optional, Jesus is not making suggestions for discussion...submission.

And so I say again, we don't start by running out half cocked, we start by getting the attitudes right. And then we can talk about obeying the specifics and experiencing the power in the last two elements.

I say this to you, believe me, with a very impassioned heart, I'm thankful to God for the places we're reaching around the world with missionaries. But I'm deeply burdened by the places we're not reaching. I'm thankful to God for the cities we reach with radio, but I am burdened deeply in my heart for the cities we do not reach. And especially when I realize that in our church alone, there are resources that are beyond belief if people ever came to grips with the kind of Christian stewardship that Christ is calling for as a result of what He's done for us. And as I said at the very beginning, the whole point of this ending in Matthew is to sum up everything that's gone before and say as Christ came into the world to give His life to win people to Himself, so you are in the world to give your life to win people to Him as well. And you've got to count the cost and be willing for the grace of God and the glory of God to pay that cost and for the joy that is set before you to give all you have for that purpose. Let's bow together in prayer.

I'm reminded, Father, of a story I read this week about the missionary who went to a remote part of the world and met a pagan lady in a primitive society and brought Christ to that lady. And over a period of time led that lady to Jesus Christ. And I remember that the lady said, "Oh, I wish you'd come sooner, so my little boy could have been saved." The missionary replied, "Why is it too late?" To which the pagan lady said, "Just a few weeks ago I offered him as a sacrifice to the gods of our tribe."

How many people are there out there who are past the point of being reached for whom it is too late? How many souls pass into the night of eternity while we pile up our trivia and preoccupy ourselves with indulgences? So much, Father, in fact it all from our viewpoint depends upon our willingness to give and to be available with ourselves, our resources. Father, help us to come to grip with these things for Your glory that we may know the fullness of what it is to live a life pleasing unto You, that we might be true followers of Jesus Christ who as He gave His life to glorify the Father through the winning of the lost, might also give our lives to glorify the Father through the winning of the lost. And if we say we abide in Christ, then we ought to walk the way He walked and that's how He walked.

Thank You, Father, for these great great days that lay at our feet, the incredible opportunities to reach this world, make us by our right attitudes of availability, worship and submission equal to the task for Your praise in Christ's name. Amen.

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