

## “Listen to Jesus Empower You”

*Matthew 28:11-20*

Before we get back into the book of Romans, I didn't want to just leave the resurrection quite yet as it feels like a letdown if we just abruptly change gears after focusing for all of Lent on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Because a lot happened after the resurrection still. According to Acts 1:4

*He [Jesus] appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

Jesus' ministry wasn't done when He rose and ascended into heaven. He left us with a mission, to continue the work He began and so here in Matthew 28 we have what we have often called 'The Great Commission'. However, many of us have probably heard many messages on the Great Commission that

- i) We assume we're going to get this guilt trip message to make us go on the mission field when most of us will not.
- ii) We presume we already know what Jesus said so we smile and nod and say, 'Yup that was good reminder for us to go and witness to our neighbour.' But it probably really won't change anything I do

If when you leave this morning and have concluded one of those points then one of two things happened; a) either you didn't listen or b) I failed to tell you what Jesus actually said.

What I hope to convey to you this morning from Matt. 28 is not to 'go witness to people' but to realize you have been empowered to witness by the Creator and sustainer of this world; by the author and finisher of our faith. So, we need to listen to how Jesus empowers us so that when we wake up each day, not only knowing that we have a mission but that we've been authorized and empowered to carry it out.

Matthew contrasts the report of the resurrection (Jesus rose from the dead) with the made-up report of the guards (Jesus' body was stolen). So, in this chapter we have the age-old battle for authority. Satan and his demonic beings were thrown out of heaven and have been persuading men and women to come under his authority. God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and their angels have been seeking to help lost men and women escape the enemies' authority and come under God's. We see in this chapter the effects of worldly power and divine power. The world's powers (armed guards, a heavy stone and a sealed tomb) are no match for the powers of God. And the tomb isn't miraculously opened so Jesus can escape – He is already gone! He didn't need the tomb opened for Him to 'escape'. He rose from the dead in body and spirit.

The challenge here is for people to choose between the authority of God over the authority of the world. The Roman guards report to the religious authorities “*all that happened*”. That would include the earthquake, glowing angel moving the stone and frightened guards. The religious authorities promise to protect the guards from the political authorities. The problem with trusting worldly authority is that . . .

**Worldly Authority Comes with a Price**  
**(28:11-15)**

The guards reported to the religious authorities because that's how Pilate left it to them in 27:65-66. They told Pilate that they were afraid that the disciples would steal Jesus' body and proclaim 'He has risen from the dead' fearing this "deception would be worse than the first". The first deception being that Jesus was the Messiah.

The irony of course is that when Jesus does rise and the report comes back to the religious leaders, they are presented once again with the evidence of the truth and they have to make a decision. And when you choose to follow the authority of this world you face . . .

### ***The pressure to hide the truth (vv.11-12a)***

Matthew uses the wording "they consulted together" intentionally because it's the same Greek word used in 12:14 when the religious leaders "plotted together" to figure out how to kill Jesus. Truth always pressures you to make a choice. In Rom. 1:18-22 we read,

*<sup>18</sup> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

This is always the pattern of denying God or the evidence of God. It's plain and obvious so to deny God's existence or the evidence of the deity of Jesus people have to suppress or hide the truth. But since the truth won't go away, then you can't just suppress the truth eventually you find you have . . .

### ***The need to lie to avoid the truth (vv.12b-15)***

The religious leaders bribe the guards to spread the lie that the disciples stole the body of Jesus – the very thing they sealed the tomb so they wouldn't do! This isn't the first time the religious leaders tried to suppress the truth about Jesus. The plot to kill Jesus involved bribing Judas to betray Jesus too. Once you begin to deny and hide the truth, you'll end up lying about it to keep you denying it. This is how the authority in the world works. Satan of course is the father of lies and the ruler of this age. He even tempted Jesus to follow Him by lying about his own authority:

*Matt. 4:8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup> "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

It wasn't really Satan's to give and besides, Jesus is already the ruler of the world and the universe! I think that one was a no brainer!!

Matthew choose his words very carefully in this section to bring about the contrast between these two diametrically opposed authorities. When the resurrected Jesus appeared to the women He said 'Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee . . .' When the guards went to the religious authorities in v.11 'they reported to the chief priests'. Same Greek Word [Apangello] for tell and report. Even the same message. One believes it, the other lies about it.

In v.15 the guards follow the example of their leaders and do as they were instructed. Same Greek word [didaskalon] Jesus will use in v.20 'teaching them to observe all I commanded you.' And the statement in v.15 'this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day'

[diaphemizo] is the same word Matthew used back in 9:31 when Jesus healed the two blind men who *'went out and spread the news about Him all over the region.'* And, the Greek word for "story" here in v.15 (referring to the false story about the disciples stealing Jesus' body) that circulated is *logos*.

There's two 'logoses' being circulated in the world; one is a lie that Jesus wasn't who He claimed and proved to be, but the other is the truth, the real "word" from God that the Bible makes clear. Two authorities, two messages. But they are not equal messages or equal authorities because the ruler of the world [Jesus] overrules the so-called ruler of this world. And this is what Matthew is building us up for now that we come to vv.16-20. Worldly power always comes at a cost, but . . .

## **Divine Power Always Comes with Promises** **(28:16-20)**

### ***Promises that we must not hesitate to believe (vv.16-17)***

*<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.*

When Jesus makes a promise, we must not hesitate to believe it. Some of the eleven worshipped while a few 'doubted' or literally hesitated. It means to stand in 2 ways. Jesus had already appeared to the 11 at least twice in Jerusalem, possibly more. He said He would meet them in Galilee and here He was. Part of why we struggle to grow spiritually is we don't take the promises of Jesus to heart. Part of why we don't share our faith as we should is because we don't take these promises right here to heart. We hesitate to believe what Jesus promises. We stand in two ways; the way of the truth and the way of unbelief.

If I were to ask you what the Great Commission is, most of us would say *'Go and preach the gospel into all the world'*. We're not wrong but because we're not fully quoting what Jesus actually said, we won't do what Jesus said because we didn't here the promise that is . . .

### ***Guaranteed by Jesus (v.18)***

The mission to reach the world starts with the guaranteed promise of v.18.

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."*

That's a guarantee. Jesus has all authority every where. Since He rose from the dead, He conquered death and has broken Satan's power over death (Heb. 2:14). Since He ascended into heaven and sits at the Father's right hand He has authority in all the spiritual realms of this universe. When we read Matthew's gospel, Jesus' authority is on display. In Ch.'s 8-9 Jesus shows He has authority over the effects of sin and disease by healing a leper by touching him. If He didn't have authority over sin and disease Jesus would have gotten leprosy. Then Jesus' heals a centurion's paralyzed servant without going to the house, showing He has authority that transcends space and time.

Then Jesus calms the raging sea of Galilee in a boat that's being tossed by the waves just by speaking to the wind. He has authority over the physical elements. Then He heals two demon-possessed men showing He has authority over the enemy. Then he heals another paralytic. And then the next story is the call of Matthew the tax-collector. What's that show Jesus has authority over? The authority to change lives by calling people to follow Him and be His disciples.

Jesus has authority on heaven and earth and therefore He has authority to cause people to turn and Follow Him when they hear the call to follow Him – even if we are being the messengers. You need more convincing? What else has Jesus guaranteed?

### **That His Church will prevail (16:18)**

*<sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

Is that a prayer or a guaranteed promise? What's the church made up of? People. You mean Jesus assures us that people will be saved and stay saved? Yes! Jesus also guaranteed . . .

### **That His message would be heard (24:14)**

*<sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

There isn't a place in the world where the gospel will not be heard. And now through the technology of the internet we can see how it can happen.

And Jesus guaranteed . . .

### **That His flock will grow (John 10:16)**

*<sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*

"I have", "I must", "they will", "there shall be one flock and one shepherd". If Jesus guarantees the growth of His church, and guarantees that His message will be heard through-out the world and guarantees that His flock will expand then . . .

### ***That gives us confidence and boldness to do His will (vv.19-20)***

And what is His will for us? To do the same thing He did when he was on earth:

### **Making disciples wherever we go (v.19)**

Unfortunately, because of our English translations we have put the emphasis on the wrong word. We have all heard many well-intentioned (and not wrong) challenges on our need to 'go' and preach the gospel. But 'go' is not the main verb here, make disciples is the main verb. 'Go' is a participle. It is subordinate to the main verb 'make disciples'. It would be more accurate to translate v. 19 as *'therefore as you are going make disciples of all ethnic groups, baptizing them . . . and teaching them.'* The word go is not the focus. The participle assumes you are already going somewhere and as you are going (locally or globally) make disciples. How did Jesus make disciples? As He was going along the shores of Galilee He called fishermen to follow Him. As He was travelling around the country He stopped on mountainsides and road paths and in synagogues and at the temple and called people to follow Him. That doesn't negate the fact that God will call some of us to be burdened for specific ethnic groups where we will travel to their home countries and call them to follow Jesus. The emphasis on Jesus' call is not so much a geographical one but a lifestyle one. Because many of us shut our minds off when we hear this verse because we have been told it's a geographical call not a lifestyle call. I pray some of you here will sense God's burden for an ethnic group that He will draw you to make disciples and move geographically. I pray that those of you who heard that call years

ago would still obey God and get involved in the ethnic people He has drawn you towards.

The world is moving. There are Arabic, Chinese, African, Vietnamese, Korean, Philippine churches all over Canada. White Caucasians are becoming the minority. I received a letter on Friday from the Wildsmiths letting us know they are moving back to Canada, not to retire but to continue to train African pastors and missionaries living here so they can make disciples and plant African churches here or back home. If you feel God has burdened you with an ethnic group, ask Him where you would have Him serve those people; whether they are in downtown Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver or in their home country.

So, the emphasis is not on geography but on ethnicity and the emphasis is on the right to do so. The even more important word we ignore in this passage is the word 'therefore'. Since *'All authority on earth and in heaven has been given to Jesus therefore'* He passes on to us that same authority to do what He did, calling people to follow Him. We have permission to share the gospel from the creator and sustainer of the world. If the world says 'No you can't', we quietly but confidently without shame say, I'm sorry but I do have the authority and I'm not ashamed because its for your own good I tell you Jesus loves you and died for your sins. And if you follow Him you won't have to suffer eternal separation from God which is the cost of our sin.

That's the main point of this verse. This gives us confidence and boldness to pray for the lost. To share the message knowing the weak but not completely powerless enemy of this world won't be happy and will kick up a storm but our Lord is King and sovereign of this world and guarantees the growth of His church and that His message will reach every corner of the world.

And one more correction to our misplaced application of this verse. Making disciples doesn't mean just getting people to make a decision for Jesus, it means . . .

### **Training them to obey the Word until Jesus comes (v.20)**

Making disciples is the main verb. We do that as we're travelling around our community and world. And we do it by first baptizing them – helping them identify themselves with Jesus – and teaching them to be doers of the Word not just hearers. Baptism always follows salvation. Baptism only means immersion. Any form of 'baptism' that occurred prior to our salvation is not what Jesus calls baptism. Your parents may have dedicated you to the Lord in a sprinkling ceremony that was their prayer that you would follow Jesus, but baptism/immersion is your decision you make after your saved to identify yourself with Jesus to your community.

Jesus made disciples. That means staying with them. Ongoing teaching and growing until we die or the age ends when Jesus returns. He guarantees His presence with us until then, again guaranteeing our salvation. Sometimes we struggle with 'losing our salvation'. If we do then Jesus lies. And if Jesus lies about that then what else has He lied about. And if He lies then He couldn't pay for our sins. Jesus said 'make disciples' not get people to make decisions. We struggle with the people who made 'decisions' for Christ early in life but never proved to be disciples wondering if they're saved or not. That's Jesus' decision not ours. We're just here to make disciples in His power and authority.

So, when you go to school or work or to that group you belong to or that team you play on this week, you have the authority from Jesus Himself to share His message of grace and love. You have permission from God Himself, the authorization from His Son and the empowering by the Spirit to help make disciples. We have no reason to be ashamed because Jesus wins. We have the confidence to share the gospel since we know the church will grow and never be destroyed that means somebody we share Christ with will become a disciple. We just don't know who.

Part of this passage, I believe, is also wrapped around John 21, when Peter and the others received Jesus' recall to make disciples. Maybe this morning that's what you needed, a recall, a reminder that our jobs, our families and our personal pursuits are not the end goal in life but the avenue through which we make disciples. As you do all these things remember you've been authorized by the King of the world to share the good news of great joy so that Lord willing we make a few more disciples and grow Jesus' church a little bigger and stronger this week.

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