

Disciple-Making Disciples

Matthew 28:18-20

Rev. Dr. Peter M.

September 27, 2020

In our busy lives let's not neglect our greatest responsibility, to participate in God's glorious gospel mission, to spread the good news, which is summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, that Jesus came from heaven to earth, lived a perfect life, sacrificed Himself for us, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, all to show us God's love and bring us to Him. It's a message of salvation (Romans 1:16), which is meant for all nations to receive (Psalm 22:27, Revelation 5:9). And God's word tells us that He backs this mission and drives it towards success. Although it comes with a cost, it's worth it. Whether we are surrounded by people who worship physical idols or idols of the heart, we are all called to participate in this mission to bring the lost to Jesus.

Let's look at the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus calls us to this gospel mission. This commission is to make disciples, because great disciples make disciples. This way the gospel spreads exponentially throughout space and time, from generation to generation across the globe. My father was a staunch Hindu but came to know Christ after going to a missionary hospital for tuberculosis treatment and being unable to refute the Bible after careful study. He passed his faith down to the next generation, so I also came to believe and to participate in this ministry to make even more disciples.

This commission is also great because the One who gave it is great. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus, who rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father. This is the command of the King of everything. But we should obey not out of fear or duty, but out of love for Him and for those He loves and desires to reach. The love of Christ compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Although in Matthew 28:16 it's clear that Jesus is talking to the 11 disciples, He extends this command in v. 20 to all disciples until the end of the age. It's a commission to all generations of disciples throughout time. It doesn't matter where you are or what your job is. Boldly proclaim the gospel through your actions and words. Although discipleship can be difficult, it can also be delightful. My brother-in-law came to Christ despite fervent opposition from his mother, and started making disciples himself. One of these disciples began participating in youth ministry and also shared the gospel to his brother and father, who were also saved. It's a delight to see the growth of disciples in Christ and how the gospel spreads from one to another.

Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations. There is a global scope. However as we see in Acts 1:8, this global spread starts locally. Missions isn't confined to cross-cultural work, but includes local missions. In fact all missions are actually local. We spread the gospel to the community where we live, because although information can be communicated at a distance, missions isn't just informational but relational. Our interactions are local, but through the power of the Holy Spirit the gospel spreads globally.

How are we to make disciples? Let's follow Jesus' example. As He went about, He intentionally identified those in whom He would invest. He interacted with all sorts of people: rich and poor, leaders and outcasts, adults and children, the healthy and the sick, and Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. We likewise invested in all kinds of people in our ministry. A young child laborer came to Jesus and eventually became a church planter. At the other end of the spectrum we had someone from the highest caste who accepted Jesus and led his father to Christ. We invested in all kinds of people, and they themselves invested in more people.

Jesus tells us to baptize disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism is a means of standing our ground, making a commitment to Jesus. It's a threshold signifying our new identity in Him. We saw a woman come to Jesus and be baptized despite her father threatening to commit suicide. She stood her ground and eventually her father also came to Christ.

We are also commanded to teach disciples to obey all that Jesus commanded. The word of God is the foundation of discipleship. We must live it out in our lives and teach and encourage others to do likewise.

Although discipleship is delightful, it also comes at a cost (Luke 9:23). We must deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. It's not something we can do by ourselves. We rely on Jesus' strength. All power has been given to Him, and through the Spirit this power works in us. We also have the assurance in v. 20 that Jesus is always with us, supporting us.

If you aren't a disciple, I encourage you to repent and believe, for Jesus saves now. If you are a disciple, then just as Jesus came from heaven to earth to bring us to God, go out into the world and bring others to Jesus, whether locally or whether you are called to go abroad. Let's make this journey together. There is much work to be done (Luke 10:2). Pray for us, and join us in the work of missions for the glory of God.