

**The Rock: 01-23-2022**

**A year with the Master**

**First reading:**

**Title:** The Mission (part 2)

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:16-20 (black bible  
Pg. 784)

**Theme:**

Today we are looking at the practical outworking of this "Great Commission".

**Introduction:**

This morning as we launch out of Luke chapter four where Jesus clearly set the parameters for His mission in the world, we look again at the last thing Matthew records for us to help in our understanding of that assignment.

We left off last week, having defined the "Go" part of this command, I think it will be good to remind ourselves of the evangelistic nature of the Gospel.

Doing so well because, two reasons. One being that we can be and usually are a little uneasy in the sharing of our faith with others.

**The Story:**

We don't live in a time or place, any more than the disciples did, where such a message is received with joy filled and open arms.

But that doesn't mean we stop sharing about Jesus. This command to go and tell, as sent ones, is not something we can side-step.

Learning how to share, as well as when to share is part of our discipleship process, both on the individual level as well as the congregational level.

Knowing your Bible, learning to be comfortable living within the dynamic tension of unanswered questions and the challenges that come along with that.

An important thing to remember: Neither you nor I can or will save people. So, relieve yourself of that burden if you have it.

To think for a moment, it is your job to save people, and to think that if you share the gospel and someone rejects it that you've done something wrong is, well wrong.

God saves, through the Holy Spirit. Our task is simply to be ready and obedient to share the message. God handles the rest. It is what Paul was making clear to

the church at Corinth as they fought about who each of them followed:

**-1 Corinthians 1:10-13 (ESV)**

"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

He says later in verse 23 very simply:

**-1 Corinthians 1:23-24 (ESV)**

"... but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Sharing our faith obviously is hard, and it is considered foolish and is too often rejected, but we are called to share anyway because the Holy Spirit is always working on those who would listen.

Our job isn't to save, but to declare. God does the saving when someone listens to that still small voice, and says: "Maybe this isn't foolish, Lord help me in my unbelief, to believe."

Second, and building on the first is that as believers of Jesus in this world, we will stand out. This makes us different, peculiar as Peter would say.

**-1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)**

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

The authorized puts it in this way:

**-1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)**

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

This is why number one is so hard sometimes. Sharing our faith in a world that thinks we are peculiar, and not in a good way, is unsettling and hard.

Yet, we need to remember Matthew's writing here, that Jesus has empowered us to fight against temptations, as well as our shyness and weaknesses in sharing our faith.

Let's be honest about it, more of us than not are timid in this area. That's not a critical statement, it's just identifying the truth and reminding us all that we are called as His disciples here in 2022, ST. Albans VT.

"Seriously? So, you really believe this Jewish guy, this carpenter was real? You believe that he actually rose from the dead? You do know that science tells us that doesn't happen."

Well, yes, common sense tells us the same thing, but the evidence points in every way to that very truth. That he rose. Yes, it is foolish and weird, but I believe it.

In this, let's remember what the writer to the Hebrews left for our encouragement:

**-Hebrews 11:1-2 (ESV)**

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation."

We live by faith, all of us. Including those who are not believers. They have faith in some system, some agenda, some world view.

That is not the question. The question ought to be, is that world view believable and sustainable? Can it be worked out and walked out in a way that makes sense?

The Biblical story can and has been. It is why we are here today. This Jesus, because He rose, thus declaring Him to be true and the only way to heaven, makes the entire message to be in conflict with this world and its agenda.

That is uncomfortable, even for those of us who believe. Let's just be honest. I am uncomfortable with that, especially when I am in an environment that is not so friendly.

Being a guest speaker at Middlebury College when it used to be allowed, standing in a classroom full of some of the brightest students around, many of whom had never even opened a bible or cared to think about such things and saying to them; "Yes, I believe this book and all it says."

Just because I am a pastor doesn't automatically mean I am never

uncomfortable with sharing my faith. I am, just as many of you are, but we are to do it anyway.

Let's remember that the question needs to circle around truth. Not my truth or your truth. That is actually not truth, by definition that is: opinion.

Our opinions may prove to be true, but that does not make them universal and absolute truths. A doctrine, if you will.

Jesus circled everything around Himself, not a concept, not an idea, but Himself. Looking again at Matthew 28:

**-Matthew 28:18b (ESV)**

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

He has given that to us. Sending us out to do three things:

**1-Make disciples** (We have covered that, at least in part)

**2-Baptize them**

**3-Teach them**

The disciples, once baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2) took this seriously. They were transformed from a group of men and women who were hiding away somewhere afraid of the authorities, to a group of

people who declared this message everywhere they could.

They were put in jail, they were beaten and a couple were killed right off, namely Stephan and James the brother of John. But they kept on with declaring the message.

This message that is so different than that of other "faith traditions", where tales of conquest and or inner enlightenment are made much of.

Land grabs, power plays for empires and resources, such as Islam. Or fixing yourself by searching for the meaning of the universe and life in the creation rather than looking for the creator.

Jesus is so unique in that He declares within Himself that He is the answer. The disciples, because of what they had learned as they had been disciplined.

His last great command to them, this great commission is why we are here today. N.T. Wright in his little commentary on Matthew puts it this way:

"From the height of this final mountain we look out at God's future from Jesus' perspective, and what do we see? We see, first, the astonishingly early results of the gospel. In AD 25 nobody outside a small town in Galilee had heard of Jesus.

By AD 50 there were riots in Rome because of Him, and by AD 65 His followers were being persecuted by the emperor himself. All roads led to Rome, and once Rome knew something, everyone else knew quite soon afterwards."

**-NTFE Pg. 209**

They took this command seriously, and each one of us are here today as a result of their faithfulness to make disciples, even at the cost of their lives.

They and we are called to baptize as well:

**-Matthew 28:19b (ESV)**

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

Part two of our marching orders. Just as Jesus was baptized in John's baptism of repentance right at the beginning of His ministry, setting the example for us, we are called to be baptized and to baptize.

Why? Because we are declaring publicly what God has done privately inside of us. Our faith, while a private thing is also a public matter. We are never told to keep it to ourselves.

So, to be clear, we are not saved by baptism. Rather we are declaring by our being baptized that God has actually already saved us.

Not to share this with any disrespect, just by way of example. I remember years ago a young adult came to me and asked to be baptized. What he said was this:

"So, you dunk me in that pool, I'm all good right?"

Well, no, not if you haven't received Jesus as savior and Lord. That needs to happen first. Otherwise, all it means is you get wet.

It is an act of obedience, and a pattern for believers throughout the New Testament, which echoes the Exodus from Egypt where the people of Israel were saved by going through the Red Sea.

They were slaves to a country on one side of that sea, and when they walked through on dry ground, because God had made the way, they stepped out the other side as free people, a peculiar people belonging to God.

Here at the Rock, we are going to begin doing quarterly baptisms. In fulfilling this part of our mission, we are going to offer baptisms to all who have come to

Christ or who have yet to be baptized as part of their faith journey.

Here we ask that a person understands what they are doing and can acknowledge that they have received Christ. We do not do baptize infant, rather we dedicate them to the Lord until such a time that they can make their own confession of Christ.

We take seriously the call of Jesus and the declaration in the Bible in Acts 8 and 10 that coming to faith drove men and women to desire to be baptized as Jesus had:

We discover in Acts 8, a story that may be familiar to us, is when the Ethiopian eunuch leaving the city has an encounter with Philip.

Philip, disciples and shares his faith by showing him how the passage he was reading points to Jesus as the risen Messiah, and the first thing the Eunuch wants to do, after confessing Christ as Lord is to get wet:

**-Acts 8:36-38 (ESV)**

“And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went

down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

We discover too, as Peter finds himself at the home of a Roman centurion and his family, in the middle of his sermon the holy Spirit decides to move and all of the man's family begin speaking in tongues.

An indicator, by the way, that their hearts belonged to Jesus. Both of these stories are ones of people searching for the truth, and followers of Jesus tell them that Jesus is their answer.

Here is Peter, astounded and saying:

**-Acts 10:46b-48a (ESV)**

"Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Why was he that way? Well, it took a vision from heaven and the angel telling him three times to do something before he got it into his head it was ok. There is hope for us too, isn't there?

They are Gentile people, beyond the scope of Israel. The disciples again, took Jesus at His word and in all haste and

seriousness began to fulfill the Great commission.

Beautiful and amazing. As Wright stated, by AD 65 the world (known at that time) was beginning to hear, to believe and to continue taking the message to the nations.

Go, make disciples, baptize them, and

### **3-Teach them:**

#### **-Matthew 28:20a (ESV)**

"...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

The Church isn't supposed to go about doing its own thing in its own way and teaching whatever she wishes.

No, again I am in many ways a very simple man. That may be debated by those who know me well, but anyway.

Jesus tells them to teach, and He tells the what to teach: All that I have commanded you.

How do we know what all that is? Your Bible -that's how. Part of being a life-long follower of Jesus, of becoming and growing as a disciple, starts with your individual time with God, in the Scriptures and in prayer.

That, combined with the need to be together as a community and congregation, helps us all to grow and to be accountable. A healthy Church focuses on these things.

She then builds out from there by prayerfully looking for the ways in our community God has us to fulfill this great commission.

But I say again, and think that it is in the private that we are equipped for the public. How are your devotional times? How much time do you spend in His word, equipping your heart and mind?

Do you carve out that daily time alone, and with your spouse talking about these things, praying about them and for each other?

If you don't or aren't, don't beat yourself up, nor do I want you to get mad at the challenge. I want to say to you, begin doing so.

For the more you know the Bible, the more you know Jesus, and the more you know Jesus, the easier it is to live like Him and share of Him when people ask.

Make disciples-Baptize-teach

