

**The Mission**  
**Matthew 28:18-20**

I understand that you could be asking yourself who is this guy? What is he doing up there? And that's understandable. My name's Cody Jenison. For those of you that don't know me, I've been around at Valley for all my life, really, but, still, I'm not normally up here, so I can understand that. I've had the joy of working with some other men in our church discussing the topic of missions, and we kind of have a committee that meets regularly to talk about these things. And it's really interesting thing because so many churches have different emphases. They have different, really, kind of passion when it comes to reaching the lost. And some churches are committed to building a certain amount of orphanages in a country. You know, some churches are committing to putting up hospitals. Some churches are committing to feeding people food. Some churches are committed to planning other churches. There's a lot of different, you know, I guess you could just say, unique ways that you could carry out this concept of missions. It's well known. We understand it because we know we're not the only ones on the earth, but when it comes to this, there's so many different ways that this could look. So, it's been a joy in our time together to hone in on this and go, what does the Bible teach? What does God want from us? What does it look like to be faithful and this term of missions and reaching the world?

Now, I'm excited today because I think you'll see as we go to Matthew 28 that it is something that is not only for those crazy people that want to move to another country. All right. Missions is not that. And I think it's good to just get realigned and realize that the mission we're going to look at today is the mission that involves every single one of us. It's all of us, and we're all together in this; and it's a unifying thing. It'll be a joy this morning, hopefully, to be stirred up by way of reminder of what is the most important thing of what we're doing here. What is our mission? Let's get back to the basics, back to what we are aimed at, what Christ has told us to do, and so we are on track. That will be, hopefully, the goal for this morning, to be stirred up by way of reminder of what our mission is of the church.

So, hopefully, there in Matthew 28 - and we can read this together - we'll start in verse 16. I'll start from there and then read down to verse 20. So, starting in verse 16 says, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to

the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ ” So, hopefully, this comes as, maybe, a more familiar passage because it is often cited and quoted. It is an important passage, and this really has - as we met in our Missions Committee - this has become what we’re going to put forth as the mission of our church, and it has been already. It wasn’t something new that we decided. This has already been on the table. This is already what Valley Bible has been about. That’s why I’m excited to say this will be a good reminder for us and, hopefully, something that propels us into taking this out to not just Lancaster but beyond.

So, we’re going to look at this, and the first thing we see in verse 18 (that’s where we’ll spend most of our time, 18-20) is the power - the power that Jesus claims to have here, and if you look at it, He says, “...Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’ ” And so, at this point, it’s necessary just to set the scene a little bit and get the context because any time you kind of jump into a book, there’s a danger of not knowing where we are. This is not right after Christ was born. This is after He has lived out His ministry. This is after He has done the ultimate work that He came to do in going to the cross and taking our sins upon Him. This is after He came back to life. All right. This is after the resurrection. This is at the very end, and these are the words that He is saying, and this is how Matthew chooses to end his gospel of Christ’s life.

So, knowing that, these are the final words, the final say, it already brings a little bit of weightiness to it. There’s some importance to what is said here. In addition to that, Matthew 26:32, just a little before this, Jesus told them that this was going to come. He says, “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” So, right before this - and Jesus did this multiple times in His ministry as He was living with His disciples and ministering alongside them for three years on and off just doing different things, going different places, talking to people, preaching, healing, doing miracles, and constantly giving the message - throughout that time, He reminded His disciples, I will go to Jerusalem. They will arrest Me. They’re going to kill Me, but I will come back to life. I will rise again. And so He would say this,

but He didn't just say it once. He's recorded saying this multiple times, so that they should have known that this was coming. I think a lot of them, though, were a little confused when Jesus was saying these words. They were more wrapped up in how exciting it was to be with Jesus and what He was doing, and they're probably like, yeah, okay, whatever You mean by that. But clearly, Jesus was in complete control of His life, and He even made this specific event, not just His resurrection, but this moment right here, where He would be resurrected, and He'd be with them in Galilee. This is the very moment that He said will come, and it has come, and this is how Matthew chooses to end his gospel.

So, there's weight to this. There's authority here, just the fact that Jesus says this, "All authority [in heaven and earth] has been given to Me..." If anybody were to make that statement now, we would think they are psycho. Right? That would be a crazy statement to make, for someone to stand up here and make that statement, we would automatically rule it out, and say, yeah, right, good try. Right? And what're your credentials again? But here is Jesus, and He doesn't even need to say His credentials because He stands as One that died and rose again. Death could not hold Him. The grave had no power over Him. The work of atoning for sin and taking it away is done. He was on the cross, and He declared it is finished. All that has been accomplished, and now Jesus need not even say His credentials. He can just stand before them in His resurrected body, and say I have the power. Right. I'm superman. Listen to Me. Right. I have all power. I have all authority, and so that's what He says in telling them this. And they would have no question at that point whether or not He truly did have the power from His Father. Other Scripture helps us out with this concept. In Philippians 2:8-9, it says this, "Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name..." Because of Christ's willingness to come and carry out His Father's mission, because of Christ's willingness to not just come and attempt but to successfully fulfill that mission and going to the cross and atoning for sin and rising again, because of that, the Father has now exalted Him, and He has the name above every name. He has all authority. He has all power.

And as Matthew has really done in his gospel, if we were to just be able to kind of take it even from chapter 1 all the way to the end, we would see over

and over again, Matthew loves showing Jesus as the King. Constantly, he puts Him on the pedestal as the King. Just even in His birth, He's descended from David. Right? He's descended from David the King, the son of David, and you see the magi come. They're these royalty, and they're bringing gifts to a baby. And all throughout Matthew's gospel, he's showing this King - showing this King. This is your King, Israel. And at the very end, Jesus makes the statement; I have the authority. I told you. I am the King. Right? This is the command from The King. There is no other. So, taking that into consideration, these are the last words that we get; Jesus has the power and authority. He is resurrected, standing before the disciples. It necessarily follows that what comes next is probably important. Right? What He has to say is worth listening to, and not just listening to but taking to heart; and that's exactly what we're trying to do as a church, and that's what the disciples would have been trying to do at this point. Right? They would have just been stunned, and hanging on to every word Jesus had to say next.

So, next we see the precept - what He did command - what He does say. After claiming and showing, exemplifying His authority, He then goes on to speak the command that you and I hold to and the disciples held to in verse 19; "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..." So, there's a lot there, and we need to break this down. The first thing we see is making disciples. A command to "...make disciples," that is the main command. That is the command, and this could be a little confusing because in our Bibles, verse 19 starts off with the word "Go..." Right. The word "Go..." and so, that obviously strikes you. It's the first word, and it sounds like a command. All right. If you tell someone to "Go..." then, seems definitely like a command. However, this is where we get a little bit of a breakdown and not a consistency with taking what Matthew wrote in the Greek to what we have now in our English version. And, really, what Matthew did write in the Greek was different. And the way that the word should be said is more going or having gone. It's a participle in terms of, kind of, literary elements there. So, "Go..." does not function as the main command, but there's more to come on that in a second. The main command here is "...make disciples..." "...make disciples..."

So, our question is what does that mean? What does that mean to "...make disciples?" And essentially, if you were a disciple and you were hearing

Jesus say this, "...make disciples," you would automatically reflect back to the last three years. You'd be thinking about the last three years you just spent with this Messiah, the last three years you spent going around from place to place with Him, the last three years you saw Him teaching, the last three years you saw Him showing compassion on people, the last three years you ate with Him, you slept in the same places with Him, you went on the Sea of Galilee with Him; and you would realize that these last three years have been basically like an internship of some sort, a mentor relationship. He has been their Rabbi. He has been their teacher, and these disciples have been the learners. They've been the students. They've been the pupils. All right. That's what's been happening these last three years. They have been in this process of discipleship, following hard after Christ. That's what's been happening this last three years. So, immediately when Jesus says "...make disciples," the disciples, probably, that were listening to this command, would've been able to connect. This is exactly what He's been doing with us. Jesus has been doing this with us. He's been making disciples. He has been our mentor. Right? He has been the one instructing us over these last three years, and so Jesus is now telling them now it's your turn. It's your turn to turn around and do the same unto others. You are to be disciples. You are to then make other disciples at this point. So, there's also a little bit more to this. So, He doesn't just say, "...make disciples..." and leave it at that. He says, "...make disciples of all the nations..." ... "...make disciples of all the nations..." And this would have definitely struck them as well, knowing the fact that earlier in their time with Christ, this wasn't necessarily the case.

Let's turn back to Matthew chapter 9 for a moment. Matthew chapter 9 - and we can go to the very end of Matthew 9 - Matthew 9:35 - Matthew 9:35 - So, to set the scene a little bit, this is Jesus, and He has been in this region of Galilee doing a lot of His ministry there by the Sea of Galilee, going around from city to city and town to town, teaching, instructing, doing His miracles and it's during this time that Jesus looks out over Galilee, and He sees all of Israel. He sees all these people that live up there and He's gripped, and that's what we see. Starting in verse 35; "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.' " So,

He looks out over this region of Galilee and after doing some amount of ministry already, He looks and sees all the work that continues to be done. There's so much work. There's so much to do. And He speaks to His disciples, and He says come here. Look at this. "The harvest is plentiful..." I need you guys to pray. Pray and ask for workers to go out into this harvest; look at all these people that need to be ministered to.

It's fun to keep reading on and see what happens next in chapter 10. Look at verse one; "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." If you were to skip down, then, to verse five; "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: 'Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" So, it's a fun thing to see what Jesus does. He sees all the work that needs to be done over Galilee. He calls His disciples to Himself, and says pray for workers. And then right after they pray, He says, all right, you're the workers, time to go. Right? They have come to Him. He said look at the work that needs to be done, and He says and you're the people. You're the guys. It's time for you to go and do the work, and so this is exactly what He's doing.

He then commissions them, and if you read the rest of chapter 10, you see Him giving them advice, and telling them how to go out, but it's interesting to note who He tells them to go to. And that's where verses 5 and 6 are important; "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." All right. He puts a little stipulation on it. There's a specific people He wants them to go to; it's the Jews, their fellow people in the land of Israel. Don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the nations. Don't even go to the Samaritans that live among you that are like half-breeds. Go specifically to your fellow Jews. That's it, the lost sheep of Israel. Go to Jews. So, there is a moment earlier on in Christ's ministry where He had done this. He had been, and notice this, it's in Galilee which is the same place we are in Matthew 28. So, He's with His disciples in Galilee, and He sends them out. This happened earlier in His ministry, but at that point in time, it was only to the Jews.

Now we go to Matthew 28, and we see, obviously, same setting - Him - His disciples - Galilee - work to be done - and He says you are to "Go ... make disciples of all the nations..." It's changed. All right. This is a shift. This is a

shift for the disciples. They can remember back earlier and say oh, yeah, we're going out to the Jews again, that's right, yeah. And we go out, and we have the power and the authority that You gave us. Yeah, that was awesome. Let's do that again. And Jesus goes, no, you're going to the nations this time. Right. It's time for you to go to the nations. For them as Jews who were so used to being in house and even had this negative view of Gentiles (they thought Gentiles were unclean, and they wanted to stay really far away from them, steer clear of any person that was not Jewish), now Jesus's telling them to go and interact with those people and make disciples of those people, those Gentiles, the nations. For them, imagine what they're thinking; this is insane. All right. This is unlike anything You've ever asked us to do. This is bizarre - to the nations? Do You realize how big that is, too? That's a world. There's so much out there that we don't even know beyond Israel. This is incredible. But this is a shift in their thinking. This is what He's asking them to do; "...make disciples," not just here but everywhere.

In addition to this, you have to also think of what Old Testament the disciples knew. The law, what Moses had taught, what they had in the prophets, everything in the Old Testament was so near and dear to them, but in the Old Testament things were a little different. God... not that God did not have a heart for the nations, He has always had a heart for the nations; and in the Old Testament you can see that; however, God's heart and how He was to reach the nations was different in the Old Testament than what we're seeing here. For example, in the Old Testament, He specified a land, Israel, and a place, Jerusalem, where His temple would be, and it was very strategic. It was in the middle of these different continents and all the people on the known world at that time; so, in that case, whatever Israel did, guess who saw it? The whole world, all the nations, all the nations saw what Israel did. So, the way that God designed it was here's the Law of Moses; you are to uphold it. You are to obey it, Israel. If you do, then I will bless you, and who will see that? All the nations. All the nations will see the prosperity, the blessing and the obedience of Israel. As a result, what was supposed to happen was then the nations would come streaming into Israel. They would come in to Israel. They would come to the temple, and they would pray, and they would worship the one true God, Yahweh. Well, as we know, it didn't work out too well for Israel in the Old Testament. And that's not exactly what we got to see happen, even though that was the way it was set up. So

God had a heart for the nations in the Old Testament, but it was different; it involved nations coming to a place, coming to Israel.

Now this is a change. This is a complete shift. Jesus is saying you are to "...make disciples of ... the nations..." and you are to go. You're not staying here anymore. It is time to mobilize. Right. It's time to move, and you are to go out to these people, and you are to reach them. It's a shift in their thinking. So, if you're a disciple, you're clear on what the Old Testament says. That's what you've been taught your whole life, and now Jesus is totally turning it on its head, and He's saying go out. This is different, but the heart is still the same. The heart is still the same for the lost, for the nations. So, this is what Jesus is saying in this main command. The main command here is "...make disciples..." But we can see, furthermore, what this is supposed to look like with the rest of the verse, and what Jesus says. So, the first thing we see that what is involved in making disciples is going. This is kind of an assumed point. Right? It's pretty much something that almost might not even need to be said, but Jesus does say it - so, going. There is a sense where the disciples need to go, and He was assuming they would go, and if you look at the book of Acts, you can find out the rest of the story. They did go. All right. And they might have been a little reluctant. It might not have been the easiest thing for them, but, eventually, they did go and they were able to go beyond and even all the way to the city of Rome from Israel.

So, it begs the question, what does going look like in this process of making disciples nowadays? What does it look like now? How are we to go, and what ways do we go? Is it required of every one of us to leave where we are, to sell our house and go live in another country? Is that the requirement? Is that the absolute necessity? Is that what Jesus is saying here? Some people have, I would say, incorrectly interpreted it that way, but that is not what Jesus is saying. He is calling for more of your lifestyle, and as you go and as you are in this process of going, it's an assumed thing that you will initiate. You will initiate people, and you will engage those around you. And so, this is something that happens live right here in our city every day. Some of you are doing it right now. You are going, and how that works and how that looks can be a couple different ways. For example, we're probably familiar with Matthew 5:16. Jesus says, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Just your very life, your very commitment to holiness, your



commitment to follow hard after Christ, to exemplify Him, to emulate Him in every way, that speaks. That says something, and that is a way of going to the people you work with, to the people that you live with and your family, to the people you interact with. Right? That is a way of going. Our lifestyles, they're important. What we do is important. It is necessary. It is a necessary component of making disciples. We need to be living in such a way that Christ is put on display. That is necessary, but is that enough? Do we stop and leave it at that? Are people able to come into a relationship with Christ just based on how you live? Some people argue yes. Some people say that that's how I share the gospel. This is how I evangelize. This is how I witness to other people; I witness through my actions. And I would say that in one sense, that is correct. We do.

Hopefully, our actions are representing Christ, but does that save people? And I think when you look at the rest of Scripture, you need more than just your life representing Christ. There needs to be more. Romans 10:14-17; Paul says this, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" So... (this is verse 17) "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." So, when we look at the rest of Scripture, there's another way that we need to go, and that is what we say, what we speak. We have to open our mouth. We have to proclaim a message. We have to proclaim the message, the message that God has given us in His Word, the message of the gospel, the message of Christ. That needs to be spoken at some point. It is not enough for us just to live a holy life. It's not enough for us just to be blameless and to look like Christ. We also need to speak about Christ. We need to speak about the danger of sin and the impending death for all those who are in sin and we need to speak about the joy of Christ and His salvation, and that we have forgiveness through Him and the necessity of faith. So, in going, we need to engage people, not just in how we're living, we need to engage people in what we say. Those are both necessary components to this commission of making disciples. We need both of those. If we just speak, but we don't live it, it's hypocritical and it's worthless. Right? If we just live it, but we don't speak, people will not get the truth that they need to hear in order to come to faith. Both these things are necessary.

Another necessary component is baptizing - baptizing. Looking on in the verse, He says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...” Baptism is an important thing. It’s a significant thing, and we’ve had the joy even of witnessing this with people in our congregation even recently at different pools that we’ve gone to and watched people take this step and identifying with Christ. And that’s exactly what baptism is; it’s the specific identification with a specific God. All right. It’s an outward sign of what has happened in our lives. It is us being bold, so bold as to tell the world and tell those around us that we are now following Christ. This is what God has done. He has saved me. And this is the way that we show it in following in this obedience of being baptized, identifying with Christ. This is exactly what happened in the book of Acts. This is the exact progression of how things worked at Pentecost when Peter was preaching to tons of people, thousands of people, and thousands got saved. After their repentance and their belief in Christ and their receiving the Holy Spirit, he encourages them - get baptized - identify with Christ - show the world that this is your new life. All right.

And then you follow on, and you go with Phillip, and he’s interacting with the Ethiopian eunuch, and he’s trying to read Isaiah 53. He doesn’t understand what it means. Phillip teaches him, gives him the gospel message about Christ. The Ethiopian gets saved and a little bit further they find some water, and Phillip says let’s get baptized. All right. Let’s make this declaration known in an outward sense what God has done in your life. And you could even go on and see plenty of other examples with Cornelius and other Gentiles all throughout the book of Acts. This was the progression. People heard the message of the gospel. They believed the message of the gospel. They received the Holy Spirit, showing they were saved, and then they displayed it. They would renounce all other gods, whatever they used to believe, the pagan gods they would worship, or they’re old background; they would renounce all that, turn from it, and they would get baptized. They would identify with Christ, the one true God.

This is exactly how it works throughout the book of Acts, and this is what we’re still doing today. People are identifying with Christ. They hear this message and are going, and then they believe this message, the message of the gospel. So, it’s important to note that what Jesus is calling for is a specific message that people must come to terms with. Some people would love to go out to the nations and to do many humanitarian beneficial works, and that’s a great thing. All right. Some people are strictly set on, you know,

feeding people. Some people would like to be strictly set on building houses for people. And those are wonderful things, and those are great opportunities for us to live out and be Christ-like. Those are great, but ultimately the fulfillment of this and what Jesus is calling for is for people to identify with Christ, to come to grips with this message, to believe this message, to identify in a way where they turn their back on everything else. And so we need to make sure that that is front and center with us in our engaging people here in Lancaster and beyond.

On the other hand, some people take baptism a little too far. Some people say that baptism is so important. In fact, baptism is a part of what saves you, and I would hope, right away, we would know that's not right. That's incorrect. That's false. That's not what Scripture teaches. I was on the Church of Christ... the LA International Church of Christ website, and under their section, under their doctrine section about conversion, here's what they have to say, "Our conversion begins with belief in Jesus as God's Son and in His death and resurrection from the dead. Subsequent steps must include unmistakable repentance of sin, embracing discipleship, and confession that Jesus is Lord. Finally, we become Christians at the miracle of rebirth with our immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins and the promise that God will give us the gift of the Holy Spirit." So, at first you might be listening to that and saying this sounds pretty familiar, and this sounds pretty good, but when you get to the end and what they include with conversion is that Christians are finally Christians when they are dumped in water. All right. And in that moment there is forgiveness of sins. There is the miracle of rebirth, and the Holy Spirit comes. Well, at this point, we must deny this. That is not what the Scripture's teaching as we already said. You can just look at the pattern of Acts and it's clear that all is necessary is for people to believe the message and they receive the Holy Spirit. That's what happened with Cornelius and his family, and they were saved. Then what followed? Obedience and baptism, that's what came next, and that is exactly what happened. Plus, if you were just to look at the full teaching of Scripture, and what you read in other books like Romans, you see that we are justified. We are saved, not by works, we're saved by our faith. It's faith, faith alone and God's grace.

So, to start to say that baptism is necessary for salvation is an adding. It's adding to what needs to be done for salvation, and so, to add works - it could be even something else like attending church a certain amount of times a

year, all right, or doing a certain amount of good deeds - and so, to throw baptism in there, you're adding to what is necessary for salvation. And that is not what Scripture teaches. So, we need to make sure we have an understanding of what baptism really is here. It's a beautiful sign, a beautiful outward sign of what has happened in someone's life. That's what it is, and that's what our goal is. Our goal in making disciples is for people to hear the specific message of a specific Savior, Jesus Christ, and for them to follow hard after Christ and be willing to then obey in baptism. So, this is the next part of what it looks like to make disciples in Jesus's command.

Then, after this, we see there is teaching – teaching, and this is pretty straight forward. He says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...” It's at this point that I think this is a really important sub-point that is often neglected, unfortunately. So many times people will be passionate about the message of the gospel, and they will want to tell everyone about the message of the gospel, and that's a great thing, and that's what we need, to be going. We need to be extoling this message and telling more people about it so they hear and believe. But often times, people after they have shared with someone and they believe, they move on, and they go to someone else, and they kind of leave these other people, almost abandon them in a sense, and that is not what Jesus's calling for here. Discipleship, the command here to “...make disciples,” it involves more than preaching the message and people getting saved. It involves teaching. The teaching is a necessary component, and it can't be left out. It's not simply as some people like to refer to as soul winning, winning souls to Christ and then moving on and winning more souls to Christ. There needs to be teaching. There needs to be building people up in the truth, and that's the goal. The goal is disciples should learn to observe all that Jesus had commanded.

Let's turn in our Bibles for a second to the book of Colossians, Colossians chapter 1. In Colossians 1 - we could go to many other places in the New Testament - but Colossians 1, we see Paul's heart for this, and Paul's desire in his own ministry for teaching to be successfully done. So, Colossians chapter 1, and we begin reading in verse 25. Colossians 1:25; “Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden

from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory..." Verse 28; "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ." This was Paul's desire, and this was Paul's ministry. This is how he modeled it. It was not enough - it was not enough just to tell people about Christ for them to receive the message and then to move on. Paul saw the necessity, the importance, the significance of teaching. And teaching for what purpose? For maturity, so that every man may be complete in Christ, everyone may be perfect in Christ, matured, grown up. It's the idea of, the analogy of the baby. When a baby is born, it is exciting, but there is growth that needs to take place and nurturing and care. In the same way, when people are spiritually reborn, they need to be cared for. They can't be abandoned, and that is exactly what Paul's saying here. This was the thrust of Paul's ministry. He wanted to make sure that teaching was taking place, and it became clearly evident in the way that he would set up leadership, in the way that he would continue to teach the Word of God even after people got saved, and he would continue to set up churches. All right. All these things are necessary, and they are exactly what sometimes we miss out on when it comes to making disciples, the great commission. So, there must be this going, engaging people; there must be people identifying with Christ and coming to faith in Him. And there must be a persistence, a continuation of teaching and growing them, so they're built up; and there's maturity that takes place. So, these things are all a part of this command to "...make disciples..." that Jesus makes.

The question then could come, as we go back to Matthew 28 and consider this, how is this going to look? Because we've already identified that this is a big change. This is pretty drastic for the disciples. They're hearing these things, and they're thinking this is different. This is very different. This is not what we're used to, and there's a big goal - the world - the nations. How is this going to look? For us it's easy because we kind of have the whole story, and we're able to look ahead to see what happens after this. We go to the book of Acts, and we see them making disciples. We see them teaching. We see them engaging people, and then, we see them setting up churches. They set up churches in every city that they go to and every place that they go to, so that this command can continue there. There will be more disciples that are made there. This is the progression of the gospel in the book of Acts.

And then you just read the rest of the New Testament letters and you see every letter is addressed primarily to a church. These churches were established in these places, and there was a continuation of teaching for the purpose of more disciples being made - making disciples - that that would actually take place and that would happen.

This is cool to see also from Jesus's own words before this point ever happened. So, let's turn back to Matthew 16 - Matthew chapter 16 - Matthew 16:13 - we see a scene with Jesus and His disciples, and He alludes to this future time He's talking about, and how it will exactly look, and how He envisions it. So, to get the full sweep of it - Matthew 16 - starting in verse 13; "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.' 'I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.' " It's a great statement to see Jesus make here in verse 18, but to lead up to it, He asks them who do you guys think I am? Who do you think that I am? There's a lot a public opinion out there. Where are you guys landing? Right. And Peter speaks up and basically hits a home run in saying You are the Messiah. You are the Messiah, the One we been waiting for. You are the Son of the living God. And Jesus says that is correct. That is absolutely correct, Peter. Well done. And then, He goes on to say, this very confession you have made that I, Jesus, am the Messiah, that will be the foundation for the church. Verse 18; "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock..." (what Peter has said) "...I will build My church..." Jesus makes a promise that He will build His church.

He's speaking of the church, and how it will fulfill everything He's setting up before He even gets to Galilee, and He's telling them this command of making disciples. Beforehand, before when maybe the disciples weren't fully cognizant, aware, of everything He was doing, He tells them this is what's going to happen; I will build My church. There will be an assembly of people that will gather together, and they will go, and they will reach out to the nations. And Jesus says I will do it. Not I'm thinking about it, it will

happen; and this isn't going to be a light task that may or may not come through. He says "...the gates of Hades will not overpower it." It's unstoppable. The creation of the church and what Christ is doing, and being the very foundation and cornerstone of it in His own life, in His Messiahship, that will be unstoppable. This is a foundation that is built, that will continue to be built, like we see in the book of Acts, and that "...the gates of Hades will..." have no chance to prevail against it. This is how the great commission will be carried out. This is what Jesus is talking about when He says you are to "...make disciples..." This is your mission. The mission is to go out and make disciples. How does that look? It looks like the church. It looks like the very thing that we're still doing two thousand years later. It's the church. This is the requirement. This is the plan, and this is the mission that we're still on as a church. So, this is exactly what Jesus says, and this is how we see it continue to unfold in the rest of Scripture.

So, going back to Matthew 28 and seeing how Jesus wraps up His words, we see the promise - the promise. In verse 20, He says, "...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ... "...even to the end of the age." At this point, there must be on our part, you know, some attempt to think what the disciples might be thinking. They've just heard a lot. Right? Jesus has made a pretty big statement, and He's resurrected. So, as the King, He has now stated the mission and with authority. He said you are going to go to the nations. It's not an option. This is what you're doing. It's a command, and this is what it's going to look like. You're going to engage them. They're going to identify with Me, and you're going to continue to teach them. And so, at that point, if you're a disciple, you potentially could be a little overwhelmed, potentially. Potentially, this is a lot to take in at that moment. This is a lot to think about. This is a lot of planning that needs to be done. All right. This is a big task, and there's only twelve, maybe, at this point, and there's a few more. And how're we going to go about this? This is a very weighty thing that Jesus is demanding, not just asking for, but demanding. And so, it is so comforting to see that Jesus brings this promise with it. They're not on their own. He's not abandoning them. They're not all up to themselves. You know, figure it out. Build My church, and let's see how you do. No, He makes this promise very clear; "...I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." And so the question might be asked, well, how is this possible? How is it, exactly, that Jesus is with the disciples if He's about to ascend into

heaven? Because we could go to Acts chapter one, and see that's what happens next. Jesus will ascend into heaven.

So, how is He with them at that point? Well, if we look back at some of the words that Jesus spoke to His disciples before He was crucified, He made mention of this. In John chapter 14:16-17, this is what Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." So, Jesus makes this wonderful statement the night before He's arrested and crucified. He says it is necessary that I must go. And if you're the disciples, you're thinking why go? This is awesome. We love having you here. We don't want You to go, but Jesus says I must go in order that the Spirit, the Helper, might come. The Helper might come and live in all of you and empower you and remind you of what I said and continue out this mission that I've begun. This is a necessary thing, and it's also, at the same time, a comforting thing. If you're the disciples, this is a comforting promise, a comforting realization that they will have God's very own presence dwelling in them as they embark upon a pretty big task. So, this is how Jesus ends it off, saying you will "...make disciples..." There's no question because I'm the King, and that's what I say, but you will have My own presence with you in this process.

So, this is a joy to think about, and I would just encourage you. I love to look around at our church, and this is happening. This is our mission. This has been our mission for a long time. We are making disciples, and if God has put us here in Lancaster, then that's where we are, and we are going to make disciples. We're going to engage with people. We're going to live holy lives. We're going to speak up. We're going to talk about the message of Christ. All right. We're going to encourage people to identify with Christ and find joy in eternal life with Him and knowing Him; and on top of that, we're going to teach people, and we are doing that, and we will continue to do that, to build up more, to really aim for perfection and maturity. That's what we're shooting for, and we will continue to do that. This is the reminder that, hopefully, stirs us up and continues to excite us about what we're doing here. Right? This is not just a Sunday morning thing either; it's something that we continue throughout the week, and many of us are, hopefully, laboring diligently at this.



So, this is the exciting reminder. It's exciting, just kind of, taking a step back, looking at our mission, and seeing how it directly impacts us here and now. And inevitably, it will carry us beyond, and it already has, to places like Mexico and Japan and other things like that. So, it's exciting. It's exciting to be a part of this task with each other, to be brothers and sisters geared towards fulfilling what Jesus has commanded us, and this is what we get to continue to do. So I would ask you, how are you being faithful to the mission? How are you being faithful to the mission? I'm sure many of you are, but I encourage you to continue in this. By way of reminder, continue in what you are doing and, maybe, if you are not, engage - engage in the mission. Commit to this. This is what the King has spoken and said. This is what we will do.