

MANUSCRIPT OUTLINE: Matthew 28:18-20

True Doctrine: Mission
by Peter Craig

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I traveled to the Amazon River Basin to document stories of what God was doing in lives of the Brazilian people. While there, we went on a three-day boat trip with a group Brazilian Christians to visit a distant, unchurched village where they hoped to share the Gospel. To make a long story short, our plans quickly went down the drain. Our boat got stuck on a shoreline, our guide to lead us to the village went MIA, and eventually we found ourselves lost the Amazon River at night with nothing but a lone spotlight to lead the way. No guide, no directions, and definitely no Google Maps.

As I gave up hope that I would be able to capture a story, the Brazilians spotted a tiny fishing dock perched alongside the river bank. Before I knew it, they headed into the jungle to see who they might find. To my surprise, a new plan was soon set in motion. Even though we hadn't found the village, they found a family in a nearby cabin who was receptive to hearing some stories shared from God's Word. I grabbed my camera, but I had questions. Where were we? Whose cabin was this? What had I gotten myself into? As these questions stirred, I watched these passionate Brazilian men work to set up generators to light the family's home. Looking back, I now realize that these men's hearts were set ablaze by something much more powerful than human will. It was as if there was a Holy wind propelling them forward. But not just a wind. After getting to know them, I learned that there were words motivating their actions...the final words of Jesus in Matthew 28, "***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...***"

These are the words that propelled the men into the jungle that night. And these are the words given to all God's people that we are going to look at as we study the Doctrine of Mission. Specifically, we are going to examine three things: 1. Jesus' Authority, 2. Discipleship, and 3. Our Response.

INTRO PRAYER

JESUS' AUTHORITY

1. Jesus' Last Words

- a. It goes without saying, but last words are important. They carry significant weight and often shed light on who a person is, what they believe, and, if they are fortunate enough to have an audience, how they are remembered.
 - i. In fact, the entire plot of the film, *Citizen Kane*, a movie hailed as one of the greatest ever made, centers on a reporter's assignment to uncover the meaning behind the cryptic last words of newspaper tycoon, Charles Foster Kane.
- b. Fortunately for us, Matthew 28 carries no such mystery. For in these verses are the explicit final words of Jesus as He concludes His ministry on earth. But unlike the final words of every other human being who has ever lived, these aren't the words of a dying man.
- c. These are the final words of the triumphant, death-defeater after He has risen from the grave and is about to ascend to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. So, if there are some final words to listen to, it's these.

Verse 18: And Jesus came and said to them, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*"

- d. Now whether you are a Christian or not, this should stop you dead in your tracks. Jesus is boldly declaring that He has been given all authority over everything...including you and me.
 - i. To the ears of many, this might sound cringe-worthy. I mean we live in Austin...in Texas...in the United States. When anyone claims authority over our lives without us getting a say-so, it's not an easy pill to swallow.
- e. So the question arises. How can Jesus make such a bold claim? I mean, what makes Him so special to have sovereign reign over every beating heart?
- f. To help wrap our heads around it, it might be useful to think about how is authority obtained in life?
 - i. Most often people earn authority by experience. Getting promoted at work would be an example of this. Authority is also attained through force. Many wars have started this way. Other times, authority is earned by effort.
 - 1. If I save enough money and buy a house, I have authority over how it's decorated, who may enter, and what types of activities can happen inside.
 - 2. For example, when our 60-year-old, mid-century wall clock was blown off the wall for the second time in a week not that long ago, I had all authority to ban my daughters from playing balloon volleyball in our living room.
 - ii. This specific example also points to another way authority is attained. I have authority over my children's lives, because of my identity as their father. I have authority because I am who I am.
 - 1. This is true for Jesus. He possesses all authority in Heaven and on earth because He is who He is.

2. Jesus' Authority

- a. So who is Jesus and what gives Him all authority?
- b. Scripture says that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, but Daniel 7 explicitly addresses Jesus' claim to authority.
 - i. Here, the prophet Daniel is given a vision where the Son of Man (Jesus) goes before the Ancient of Days (God the Father).
 - ii. Daniel 7:13-14: It says... *"and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*
- c. In this prophetic vision, God is giving the Son of Man a kingdom. But this isn't just any kingdom. It's a kingdom of all peoples, nations, and languages. A kingdom that will never pass away! A kingdom with only one, true sovereign King.
- d. This is the prophecy that the crucified and resurrected Christ, having triumphed over sin, death, and evil, is announcing has been fulfilled when He proclaims *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"*. And this is the staggering, cosmic reality that Jesus is presenting before us today! All dominion and authority are His!
 - i. Now, for some of you, that's not enough. You may prefer to accept Jesus as a wise teacher or great moral guide, but not the one who holds authority over your life. That's understandable, but Jesus isn't giving you that option. He is who He is and, because of this reality, He possesses all authority...period.

1. If you struggle with that idea, I can sympathize, but I want to encourage you to consider how Jesus chose to use His authority, which we'll look at in a moment.
- ii. Now, for the Christian, the implications of this truth are exactly the same. However, as a follower of Christ, your faith-filled recognition of His authority requires a faith-filled response to His command...

DISCIPLESHIP

1. The Great Commission

Matthew 28:19-20a: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

- a. First off, Jesus isn't mincing words here. For a teacher who often spoke in parables, this is as potent and direct as it gets. All authority is His...therefore we, as followers of Christ, are commanded to make disciples.
- b. So how exactly do we do this? Jesus tells us. We go, baptize, and teach!

2. Go

- a. First, we go...following Jesus, because Jesus is the preeminent "Go-er", leaving the throne room of Heaven to come to earth and address humanity's greatest need...our greatest need...our bondage to sin, evil, and death!
 - i. For some of you, the concept of sin and evil might sound outdated and unpalatable. But let me ask...do you ever get the sense that something broken in this world? Consider your news feed, injustices you see, strained relationships you may have. Do you ever feel anxious, lonely, hurting, and searching for peace? These are the effects of our sin, caused by evil, that result in death.
 - ii. This is how Jesus chose to use His authority, by coming to us, not as conquering king, but as a suffering servant who went to the poor, the sick, the lost, the outcast, and the brokenhearted.
 - iii. He went where there was need. Not just physical need, but true spiritual need. And this is exactly where He is commanding us to go.
- b. In John 20, Jesus says, "...As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."
 - i. The Sent is now sending and His command to go is aimed as much at the hearts of His disciples in Galilee and as it is directed through time and space right at the hearts of those of us who trust in Jesus in this room.
 1. How can this be? Because the One who commanded it is still with us as promised in the next verse, "*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"
 - ii. And so, as recipients of Christ's grace, we are commanded to go in Christ's authority in the same way He went...to those in need.
 - iii. To some of you, this might sound terrifying. But Jesus is not commanding you to go in your own strength. He's telling you to go in His Authority. He's also not telling you to be someone you're not. As a disciple, He's telling you to go as you already are...in Him and in His power!
 1. Illustration: If I can brag on my wife for a moment, she does this really well. Almost every afternoon she "goes" out to our front lawn, sets down a chair at the edge of our street, and makes herself available while our daughters play. And, by the grace of God, people come. Parents, kids,

and dogs, alike. When I round the corner to come home every evening, it's like a neighborhood block party in front of our house. Erin jokingly calls it her "street ministry." Funny enough, that's exactly what it is, because every single one of these neighbors, now many of them friends, have a deep need to know Jesus. She goes to those in need.

- a. This might seem small, but in our lives, this is where the need is. Our front lawn is our frontline.
2. Yours might be your work, your friends, or...maybe your front lawn as well. For some of you, it might mean another city or even another country to make disciples of all nations.
3. If that sounds impossible to ever do. Be encouraged. It's God who does it...And you're the proof.
 - a. You see, Christianity doesn't come with a "made in America" sticker on it. We are the nations that Jesus commanded His disciples to reach over 2000 years ago and I can stand here declare His Name because of God's power working through the Spirit-filled obedience of the men and women who followed Christ's command to go to the nations!

3. Baptize

- a. Okay, so we go, then what? Jesus commands us to baptize "*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*".
- b. This is exciting, because baptism is an expression of the Gospel! It's the result of Spirit-led repentance and faith in response to hearing the good news that Jesus used His authority not to just to go and serve, but to absorb the punishment of our sin and give us eternal life through His sinless life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection!**
 - i. This is the Gospel that Jesus is commanding us to go and preach and this is what baptism represents!
 - ii. When we baptize people, we baptize them into this stunning new life! Not only that, but we baptize them into a stunning new family!
 - i. The phrase "*in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*" can also be read, "*into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*." So when we baptize, we have the great honor of ushering people into an intimate relationship with God in all three persons. They are adopted into His family! That family includes us, the church!
 1. Illustration: Now, I once spent some time with a joy-filled Christian man in Cambodia who described baptism as a wedding ceremony...an intimate celebration symbolizing the reality of God bringing us into His family through Jesus' death and resurrection. This has always stuck with me. Not because of the analogy, but because of the man sharing it. You see, being united with Christ was meaningful to him, because he saw his sinfulness and Christ's righteousness for what they were. Specifically, he had personally overseen the imprisonment, torture, and deaths of thousands of innocent people during the Khmer Rouge regime of the late nineteen seventies. Thousands! But over a decade later, another Cambodian man following Jesus' command to "go", came to him and shared the Gospel. Now this war criminal is spending the rest of his life in prison while enjoying the forgiveness of Christ!

- ii. Talk about good news! This is a person who was full of sin, evil, and deserving death, but, by God's grace offered in Christ, He was given a new life and a new family with God Himself as His Father!
 - iii. This might sound shocking, but if you put your trust in Jesus, that's your story. That's my story!
- b. And that's the story that we have the honor and privilege to proclaim. The Gospel. And by the power of the Spirit working in the human heart, that's the story that saves!
 - i. In Romans 1:16, Paul shares: "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"
- c. So when we go, we go to share the Gospel, because the Gospel has power to save. In fact, the Gospel is the power of God for salvation!
- d. This truth should help free us from the objections that may have prohibited us from sharing in the past. Like, "What if I don't say right thing?" Have faith! It's the Gospel that saves. Or "What if I don't have all the answers to people's questions?" Rejoice! God's power brings salvation, not yours!
- e. So when we share, we don't do it from a soapbox or high horse. We do it like Jesus...full of humility, grace, and love. We do it in life and in relationship. We do it as friends, coworkers, neighbors, and family. We do it by being present and listening for need.
 - i. The reality is, everyone has a need or longing they can't quite satisfy. They want to be loved, to be known, and to have hope and identity...to be forgiven.
 - 1. The Cambodian man had a deep longing to be forgiven of his guilt. A lot of people struggle with guilt and try to compensate for it by pursuing a successful career, giving their family a comfortable life, but that guilt still haunts them.
 - ii. So we sit with them and listen for these longings while waiting for the whispering wind of the Holy Spirit to speak. And when He does, we respond.
- f. We do it in word, yes, but we also do it in deed...in action.
 - i. Words not backed up by action can sometimes ring hollow and unconvincing. Deeds without words of Truth can inspire hope, but never new identity and new life! But when the Spirit is moving and both are at work, people can catch a glimpse of the Kingdom and the King Himself, Jesus Christ!
 - 1. Because this is how Jesus lived. He shared the truth of God's Word, yes, but He also was a foretaste of His coming Kingdom by meeting people's physical needs as well. He healed the sick, served the poor, fed the hungry, engaged the lonely, and loved everyone He crossed paths with to absolute perfection.
 - ii. Jesus shared God's love in both word and deed, because Mission is not only a Doctrine only to be learned, it's a life to be lived...it's a whole person endeavor that serves the body, heart, and mind.
 - iii. This takes time and patience. And like Jesus, it also takes love and great sacrifice.
- g. And this love and sacrifice is what I saw in the Brazilians that night in the Amazon. What started as sharing God's word with one family quickly grew when more families came to hear the men share. That evening, the Brazilians laughed, they listened, and the Gospel was shared. By the end of the night, by the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Gospel, nearly everyone in that cabin was stirred toward faith. I remember distinctly, the

mother of the household declaring in Portuguese, "This is the happiest day of my life!" These are the words of a woman who has been given new life!

- i. But this isn't just happening overseas. It's also happening here! Just recently in our city group, we've gotten to celebrate new faith as a result of one our own, Loma Miller, patiently and faithfully sharing the Gospel with her cousin's girlfriend. Now she is steadily teaching her what it means to follow Christ while getting the joyous honor of watching Jesus transform this young woman's life!

4. Teach

- a. So we go and baptize, but we also teach. **Matthew 28:20a: "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."**
 - i. You see, baptizing without teaching is like sending an army recruit to the frontlines of war right after they leave the recruiting office. They aren't going to last long in the fight. They aren't equipped for it.
 - ii. Maybe you have seen this happen with someone you know. They heard the Gospel and received it with great joy, but when difficulty and temptation came, their faith disappeared or it steadily deformed into something that resembled their longings, comforts, and schedule. They, in essence, became their own authority and God.
 1. Illustration: In many ways, this was me in high school. Living in a household with Christian parents, I heard the truth about Christ and checked all the right boxes in terms of looking the part, but there were no deep burrowing roots in my faith. Without grounded teaching from God's Word, I ended up waving the name of Jesus around like a magic wand while living a self-centered and disobedient life.
 2. The truth is, I wanted Jesus as my Savior, but I had no understanding of what it meant for Him to be Lord.
- b. But, by God's grace working through many men and women of faith that He placed in my life along the way...
 - i. I was taught that Jesus is my Savior, yes, but His blood didn't just save me, it purchased me, making Him my Lord!
 - ii. I was taught to lay down my magic wand of self-centeredness and pick up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.
 - iii. I was taught to ask the Holy Spirit to help me love my neighbor, serve the poor, feed the hungry, seek the lost, and share the Truth.
 - iv. I was taught that God wants people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to hear the Gospel and to be drawn into an eternal relationship with Him.
 - v. And finally, I was taught that we each have a role in that great missional effort. We, as disciples of Jesus Christ, are commanded to go in Jesus' authority and power to baptize and teach in order to make disciples all nations!
- c. Now, do I live out all this out perfectly? By no means. But I am also taught, in this very church, that I am not saved by works. I am saved by grace and grace alone!
- d. To say it plainly, we are commanded to teach so that persevering faith will burrow deep and eternal fruit will grow wide.
- e. This is exactly what happened in the Amazon. Several months after returning home, I was contacted by a friend in Brazil with an update from that night. After we left, one of the Brazilian Christians went back to that family by boat, week after week, to teach them God's Word and show them what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Soon after, a church was planted in their home, even more lives were transformed, and other villages nearby

saw the effect that Gospel had on that area and they asked the Brazilian Christians to share the good news with them. Eternal fruit was born!

OUR RESPONSE

1. The Past

- a. So what's our response to all of this? Go to Brazil and get lost on the Amazon River? Maybe. Or maybe you should go to Dublin or Montreal. Or start leading a city group, or mentor someone younger in their faith. Whatever it is, Jesus' authoritative command certainly does require action.
- b. So what now? First, let me challenge you to consider your past.
 - i. Honestly ask yourself. Have you been neglecting Christ's authority and His command to make disciples? For many of us, this command isn't new. But take a moment and ask yourself: Am I striving to obey it?
 - ii. If your answer is no, have hope. In Christ, God loves you and, because of that truth, you can confess our sin and turn back to Him in repentance and faith.
 - iii. But, don't do this alone. Do it in your city group and fight club. And, when you do it, rejoice! You are forgiven. This is the good news!

2. The Present

- a. Secondly, consider your present.
 - i. Remember, repentance is turning from our sin back to God in obedience.
 - ii. So ask yourself: Where has God placed you right now to make disciples?
 1. Again, consider your work, neighborhood, family, and friends. There is a good chance that God has already placed you exactly where He wants you to be a light in darkness.
 - iii. In fact, many of you have already been sent.
 1. Think about it. It's a rare thing to meet someone in this church who hasn't moved to Austin from other parts of the country. Many have moved for jobs, to launch start-ups, for school, maybe some of you because you simply like breakfast tacos. I can sympathize with that.
 - iv. No matter the circumstance, there is a greater reality at work. The Holy wind of the Spirit has sent you right here, right now.
 - v. It is no accident that you know Jesus and live in Austin. This a recipe for life for those in our city who do not know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. So go, be available, be intentional, and be specific.
 - vi. As a step of obedience and faith in Jesus, I want to encourage you to take spiritual responsibility for one or two people in your life right now. Share their names in your city groups and fights clubs. Begin praying that God soften their hearts and open their eyes to the Gospel. Make yourself available to them, love them by listening and, when the Spirit speaks, follow His leading and give them the reason for the hope that is in you.

3. The Future

- a. Finally, consider your future.
 - i. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*
 - ii. We see in this verse, Jesus sending His disciples from Jerusalem (their Austin) all the way to the end of the earth.

- b. Right now, God has given you relationships right here. But, like His disciples, He is also commanding you to go to new people and new places.
- c. In response to this, begin a rhythm in your life of asking the Lord in prayer who He might be sending you to. Surrender your authority and personal preferences at the feet of Jesus and see what Holy Spirit has to say.
- d. Maybe He is calling you to the nations...the unreached people of the world who have never been offered the opportunity to hear the Gospel. If so, praise God and Go in His authority! Maybe He is calling you to go to your hard-to-get-along-with-neighbor. If He is...give Him glory and go in His power!
- e. The important thing is to humble yourself, ask the Lord, and prayerfully go where the One who has all authority is sending you.

CONCLUSION

The reality is, we are being called to the frontlines of the greatest endeavor in human history and, through Christ, we have been freed to go with great joy to share the greatest news there has ever been. But the good news doesn't stop there. Before Jesus ascends to Heaven, we are given a promise that should do well to help empower our obedience for the rest of our lives...

Matthew 28:20b: “*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*”

Jesus sends us, but He doesn't send us alone. First, we have each other, the family of God, but most importantly, we have the promise from Jesus Himself that we get His presence to the end of the age. And if there is something to remember about Doctrine of mission, remember that. You have Christ and He is not going to leave you or forsake you. By His grace and through His sacrifice on the cross, you are His and He is yours. That's news good enough to tell the world!