

The Great Commission

Matthew 28 v 16-20

Context:

We begin this autumn term exploring this wonderful passage at the end of Matthew's Gospel which brings the earthly ministry of Jesus to a glorious and dramatic climax. After 3 years of teaching, healing and miracles, Jesus was arrested, tried and executed. On the third day he rose again and now, in Matthew 28 v 16-20, Jesus gathers his closest followers together and gives them their marching orders. Let's join them.

Observation:

1. Who is mentioned in v 16? Where did they go and why?
2. What mixed reaction did Jesus receive when they saw him according to v 17?
3. What amazing claim does Jesus make in v 18?
4. What command does he give them in v 19?
5. What further instruction does he give them at the beginning of v 20?
6. What stunning promise does he make in the second half of v 20?

Meaning:

1. Why were there only eleven disciples mentioned in v 16 and not twelve? Which mountain do you think they went to?
2. What does the fact that they worshipped Jesus (v 17a) indicate about their understanding of his identity since the resurrection?
3. Why do you think some doubted (v 17b)? What were they doubting and why?
4. Who gave Jesus the absolute authority he speaks of in v 18 and what does this tell us about him?
5. Jesus uses his absolute authority to command his followers to 'go and make disciples' (v 19a). What do you think the word 'disciple' means?
6. Up to this point in the biblical story, God's redemptive focus had been mainly on Israel, the Jewish nation. Why do you think he now instructs his Jewish followers to go and make disciples of the nations (i.e. the Gentiles, the non-Jews)? How might they have felt about having to take the Gospel to pagans who they had always regarded as unclean and ungodly (see Ephesians 2 v 11-13 for a sense of how Gentiles would have been regarded by Jews until this point).
7. Jesus then tells in them v 19b-20a *how* to make a disciple of someone. First, by baptising them in the name of the Trinity. What does this baptism signify and why is it a crucial part of making a disciple?
8. Second, making a disciple involves teaching those who have been baptised everything Jesus had commanded them. Why is this teaching a critical element in disciple-making? What kind of things would they have taught new disciples?

9. Why is Jesus' promise at the end of v 20 so important and how could this promise be true if Jesus is in heaven?

Application:

1. How might *worship* and *doubt* be intermingled in *our* relationship with the crucified and risen Jesus?
2. If all authority has been given to Jesus, what does this say about his relationship with the world, the church, and us as individuals?
3. What does your baptism mean to you?
4. How might we continue to grow as a disciple of Jesus and help others to grow too?
5. Do you think this 'Great Commission' to go and make disciples was intended only for the first apostles, or for every generation since then, including us today?

Pray:

- Thank God for the Gospel.
- Pray for grace and courage to share it with others.
- Ask God to help you continue to grow as a disciple.