

The Great Commission

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 July 2019

Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 00] The question is, what is the mission of the church? In other words, what are we here for? And it's an important question to ask, especially for us at our stage as a church plant.

What are we about? What is it that we should do? And in this passage, Jesus tells us what we should do. Because the mission of the church essentially is summarised in the Great Commission of Jesus.

That is our task. And so what we're going to do today is look at the Great Commission and see what it means to make disciples. And see what that means for our church plant.

Because it's interesting, there's never any direct command in the Bible to go and plant churches. And yet, we plant churches because churches make disciples, which is what Jesus commands us to do.

And so starting a new church is a great way to make new disciples. So what is a disciple? Well, disciples are those who trust, follow, and learn from their master.

[1 : 03] And so we're disciples of Jesus Christ if we believe in him, if we follow him, and if we obey him. And so just as we enter the Great Commission, just let's think about the context of this.

What is the context? Well, Jesus has just completed his mission on earth by dying on a cross. And he has been raised to life again. And soon he's about to ascend into heaven.

So it's a mission accomplished for Jesus. But what he does here is he brings his disciples together. And he instructs them on their mission. Because their mission as disciples flows from his mission. And so Jesus, if you like, is passing the ball to his disciples. And he wants them to run with it. He's giving them his marching orders. And so just notice how the Great Commission is dominated here by the word all.

There are four amazing truths that are tied together by the word all. You see that on the inside of the service sheet. All authority, verse 18.

[2 : 07] All nations, verse 19. All things, verse 20. And then always, or literally all the days, again in verse 20.

These are four alls. And they're all universal. They're all encompassing. And so what we're going to do is we're going to look at how the Great Commission of Jesus should impact our church plant under these four headings.

You'll find them on the inside of the sheet. First, all authority. Jesus reigns everywhere. All nations, we seek everyone. All things, we teach everything. And always, Jesus is with us forevermore.

So first of all, all authority. Jesus reigns everywhere. Notice what Jesus says. He says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

So Jesus reigns with absolute supremacy, with dominion over heaven and over earth. All authority, we read, has been given to Jesus by God the Father.

[3 : 10] And so Jesus gave up his life, died on a cross. But God the Father raised him from death and has exalted Jesus as Lord of heaven and earth.

He's exalted. And so Jesus, he fulfills the Old Testament vision that there is of the Son of Man in Daniel, Daniel chapter 7. The Son of Man is described as this authority figure with ultimate power, ultimate authority, and whose kingdom will never, ever be destroyed.

And what we're reading here is that Jesus says he has all authority. And so one day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And so it's on this basis that Jesus is Lord and he will reign forevermore, that Jesus then commissions his disciples to go out and make disciples of all nations.

So Jesus is setting the agenda here as Lord for the work that he once done. Abraham Kuyper, who is a former Dutch prime minister, said this.

[4 : 16] He said, There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence, over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine.

So Jesus has authority over all things, all people, at all times, and in all places. And it's because Jesus has this authority, because he reigns everywhere, that's why we go out in every single generation to proclaim the good news about Jesus to the world.

And since all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus, it means that there's no part of this world that is not under his sovereign rule.

So Jesus is Lord over all and he reigns everywhere, which means there are no religions and no nations that don't belong to Jesus, which means Muslims in Iran, Buddhists in Thailand, Hindus in India, Communists in China, Atheists in the UK, all belong to Jesus and all are under the authority of Jesus, whether they know it or not, which means that Jesus has authority over world rulers, over kings, over queens, over governments, over politicians.

He has authority over the UK, over the USA, over China, over everyone. Because all these nations, all these rulers are all part of the earth, which Jesus has authority over.

[5 : 52] So cities like Glasgow and towns like Gifnick and villages like Gerlach all belong to Jesus. So Jesus has authority over me, over my family, over my neighbours, over my workmates, over my life and over our church.

There's no limit, no limit to the authority of Jesus over everyone and everything. And that's why everywhere in this world must be reached for Jesus.

Because every place is full of people who need to know Jesus as their saviour and who must bow to him as their lord before one day they will be forced to.

So whether it's in Syria or whether it's in Scotland, Jesus sends his people, his disciples, those who follow him, out to unreached places so that the people there might have the opportunity to hear about him.

And because Jesus is all authority, it means that anybody can be reached for Jesus. Nobody is too far away from Jesus that they can't be reached. Nobody is living too wicked and evil a life that they can't be reached.

[7 : 06] And nobody is too hardened that Jesus can't save them. So Jesus is not limited to reaching educated middle classes who seem to live relatively normal and balanced lives.

Jesus can also reach those addicted to alcohol and drugs and whose lives seem to be much more of a mess. So Jesus has all authority and he reigns everywhere.

Secondly, Jesus has authority over all nations and he wants all nations to hear of him. So all nations, we seek everyone. Jesus said, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

The word for nations is the Greek word *ethnos*, which is where we get our words ethnic and ethnicity from. Sometimes it's translated Gentiles, because essentially it's referring to a group of people who are distinguished from the Jews.

And so the people of God, we're being told, are made up of people from every single nation. And this is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham way back at the beginning of the Bible.

[8 : 18] In Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, there's the promise that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. And Jesus is saying it's going to happen as people from all over the planet are made disciples of him.

And that's why when you think of heaven, picture heaven as this great and glorious multicultural people, that can't be numbered from every tribe and tongue and language and nation, and all crying out in a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God.

That's what heaven will be like, made up of people from all nations. And yet we're not there yet. That's why Jesus gives his great commission, because it is part of getting us there.

And so Jesus commands his disciples to go to all nations, indicating that we are to seek everyone as a church. So even if the word to go here, go therefore, even if the word go is the participle, so going or as you go, as in we go through each day, as we go through our lives, the word go has still got this sense of movement, because we're going to need to go to all sorts of people if we are to be obedient to Jesus' command to go and make disciples of all nations.

So Jesus sends us out, us following his disciples back then, to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth in order to make disciples of all nations.

[9 : 58] And so whether you fly across the world to do this or whether you just walk across the street in Glasgow, we're going to meet people from other nations.

And so we should do what we can to see people from other nations come to Jesus. It's amazing the amount of people from other nations that come to the UK.

They might come here for business or for education, or they may be here because of immigration and they're seeking asylum. But however people end up in the UK, or more specifically, however people end up here in Glasgow, as churches or as our church, we should welcome them in the name of Jesus.

Because if they become disciples, they will be the best people to be missionaries, to reach those in their city of their own kind, their own nation.

And they'll also be the best people to go back to their homelands and reach people there for Jesus. And so Jesus is calling his disciples then and us now as his disciples to be part of this cross-cultural missionary movement.

[11:07] And to be part of this movement, we don't even need to leave our city to reach people of all nations. We just need to walk outside the door and down our street. And we will bump into people who are culturally and linguistically and ethnically different from us.

And so the command of Jesus here challenges us, doesn't it? It certainly challenges me to get out of my comfort zone by going to people who are different from me. Different in terms of race, different in terms of religion, language, culture, social status, sexuality.

The challenge is to go to those who are different to give them the opportunity to hear the good news about Jesus. So we just can't wait for people to walk through a church door.

This is not our church, but you get the point. We can't wait for people just to come in because that's never going to happen. And yet if God is sending people from all over the world here, then as Christ's church, then we've got to make the effort to befriend them so that they can hear about Jesus.

And those, Jesus says, who come to saving faith in him as his disciples should be baptized. That is part of his command.

[12:26] Jesus said, Go therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So disciples are baptized in the name of Jesus in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit because they belong to him.

The disciples are baptized because they belong to God. And if they be brought into a relationship with God, then they belong to the church. And so they're brought into relationships with other brothers and sisters in Christ.

So that's the second point. All nations, we seek everyone. Third point is all things. We teach everything. Jesus said, Go therefore to 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.

So the command here is primarily the command to make disciples. And it's a task that involves baptizing and teaching. And so just as baptizing implies conversion and inclusion into God's family, into the church, so teaching emphasizes that Jesus isn't just looking for converts, but he's looking for committed disciples.

So it's a call not just to get people to make decisions for Jesus, which is important, but to make them disciples of Jesus. And so, it's going to take time to make disciples, isn't it?

[14:01] Disciples need to be taught. And so Jesus sends his disciples out to teach others to observe all that he's commanded. The word observe means to keep or to guard.

And so it means teaching not just what to believe, but how to obey and how to follow. And so Jesus wants disciples who faithfully follow everything that he has commanded.

And so that will be everything that he commanded his first disciples, but for us it will mean everything that we find in God's word to us in the Bible. And so today, we will be teaching as part of what it means to be a disciple, teaching much that is unpopular in today's culture.

Because much of what Jesus teaches and says is counter-cultural. And as a result, some don't want to teach everything that is in the Bible in case it offends some people.

Some will only teach what is comfortable for people. And yet, that's never going to make genuine disciples, is it? And so Jesus is saying we must teach everything, including the unpopular and the difficult parts of the Bible.

[15:16] You need the whole Bible to make a whole Christian. The whole Bible to make a genuine disciple. And so we'll need to teach judgment as well as grace, justice as well as love, obedience as well as salvation, hell as well as heaven, and suffering as well as triumph.

And we need to be clear on how, what God commands us to do, we need to be clear on how, what he says is significant and important for our lives today, applying it to ourselves in a sensitive way so that we're able to follow what God is saying to us.

So we need to teach and apply the reality of sin, the need for forgiveness, the inevitability of God's punishment and the prospect of an eternity in hell, the claim that Jesus is the only way to God, so therefore there's no salvation to be found in any other religion, the fact that our gender has been assigned to us by God, our creator, and the fact that God's design for our human sexuality is the best for us to fully flourish as human beings and so on and so on.

Of course we're going to tackle all these issues on the day that we launch, but over time these issues do need to be tackled because they're part of what Jesus has commanded us to observe. So if we're going to obey Jesus and if we're going to make disciples then we're going to have to apply, teach, and then apply what the Bible says to be obedient to Jesus.

[16:55] We need to do that. And so even as a church plant we're never at liberty to gloss over difficult aspects of the Bible's teaching because we want to establish a church that produces disciples that make disciples.

Disciples who obey Jesus who can teach other people to obey Jesus. And so we need to teach everything and that happens not just through preaching on a Sunday but through each of us throughout the week.

So yes, we need gifted teachers and leaders but we also need to handle the Bible correctly whether in small groups or in one-to-one with others.

And that's why at Christ Church Glasgow the community group is so significant and in time the community groups will be the best training ground to study and then apply God's word to our lives.

And if we're teaching everything then we need to be realistic about how long it is going to take.

There's no point planting a new church if we're not reaching new people.

[18:05] And if we do want to reach new people then new people will need time to hear God's word, understand it, apply it and live it.

And so if it takes time for a disciple to become a disciple then it's going to take a heavy investment of your time and my time to help people become true disciples of Jesus.

Because discipleship the very term means a lifetime of learning. You never graduate as a disciple and there are no shortcuts. And so that's why in making disciples it will need more than formal teaching on Sundays.

It will need the kind of discipleship that Jesus gave himself to his own disciples. Remember he spent three years with them investing his time, his very life with them so that they might know how to follow him.

And so if we're going to make disciples here at Christ Church Glasgow baptising them and teaching them then it needs the whole of Christ Church Glasgow to do it. We need to be disciples who invest in people so that they can be disciples who know and love and follow Jesus.

[19:18] And so the challenge is what are you doing and what am I doing to help ourselves mature as disciples of Jesus? And what can we do to help other people become disciples of Jesus?

What we need is a well taught core who can teach and model discipleship. So all things we teach everything. Fourthly, always Jesus is with us evermore.

Sorry, for evermore. Jesus said, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. So Jesus ends here, not with a command, but with a promise.

It's a fantastic promise to his disciples that after his death and his resurrection, he sends them out as the risen Lord, promising that he will be with them.

And there's no way that they could ever contemplate going out themselves without Jesus' presence and his empowering on the mission that he'd given them to do.

[20:20] And the wonderful assurance that Jesus was with them and with us is what we need as we seek to go and make disciples for him. And so the final all here in this short passage is the word always.

Or as it says literally in the original, all the days. All the days. And surely I am with you all the days to the very end of the age.

So Jesus is saying here that there's never a day when his presence is not with his people. Jesus is with us now and he will be with us forever more.

And so just as Matthew's gospel, if you remember the beginning, the Christmas story, as it began with Jesus as Emmanuel, which means God with us, so Matthew's gospel ends repeating and confirming the fact that God is with us.

And he is God with us to the end of the age or to the end of human history as we know it. So Jesus is promising that when we do what he commands, he'll be with us through thick and thin until the day he returns, which is when he'll then take us to be with him forever.

[21 : 39] And so while the gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus' great commission, the mission of Jesus continues until he comes again. And that's how we know that Jesus' words here weren't just for his first disciples, but they're for disciples in all ages.

Because Jesus has given us his marching orders, and because he has, then there's no doubt about what we should do as his people, as his church.

And so it's never going to be easy living for Jesus, it's never going to be easy obeying Jesus, it's always going to be costly. You know it's costly, and I know it's costly.

It's costly for me, it's costly for you, it's costly in terms of our time, because we need to serve, it's costly in terms of our finances, because we need to give, and there's also a family cost as well, because, for example, we've got children here, but we don't have all the kinds of youth groups that we'd love our children to be part of.

And so there's a cost for them too. And despite the cost, isn't it a great privilege to count the cost of following Jesus, because we're never alone. Jesus is promising to be with us, whether we're old or whether we're young, he will look after us.

[23 : 02] He will never abandon us, because he's not joining us on our mission, we're the ones who are joining him on his mission. And so we can be confident that Jesus will never, ever leave us high and dry.

And we've experienced that as a young, new church plant, haven't we? I've experienced that for our family, and we've experienced that together. And so we need to trust God to provide as we seek to obey.

So just as we wind things up, look at those, all authority, Jesus reigns everywhere, all nations, we seek everyone, all things, we reach everything, and always, Jesus is with us forever more.

So to be a disciple of Jesus Christ means to be commissioned to make new disciples of Jesus Christ. So the job description couldn't be clearer.

This is the task of the church. Yes, we know prior to this, the task of the church is to worship God and glorify him and enjoy him, but the task of the church is to make disciples.

[24 : 16] And so it's easy to review, isn't it? It's easy to review how faithful we are to what Jesus says by asking ourselves, are we making new disciples?

And are we maturing as a disciple ourselves? So as part of our worship, our worship of God, the mission of the church is to make disciples.

It's what we're here to do. That's why we're planting a new church, is to make more disciples. And we've got fantastic news to share. Jesus is Lord, Jesus came into this world, died on a cross for our sins, Jesus rose to rule, and one day Jesus will return as judge.

church. And it's the good news of what Jesus Christ has done, when we believe it, that's what will motivate us to go and serve Jesus in this world.

So everybody who turns to Jesus, turns from their sin, and believes in him, will be saved. And that's what we want for those who live around us, those in the northwest part of Glasgow.

[25 : 24] And so our motivation is that all authority has been given to Jesus. Jesus reigns everywhere. Our goal is to reach all nations, so we seek everyone.

Our task is to teach all that Jesus has commanded, so we teach everything. And our confidence is that Jesus is always with us. And so let's go for it.

As Christ Church Glasgow, let's go for making disciples. That's what Jesus wants us to do. That's what he commands us to do, and he promises he'll be with us as we seek to do it.

for him. So let's take every opportunity this week that God gives to us, and this year that God gives to us as a church, let's take these opportunities to make disciples of all nations.