

The Great Commission

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[0 : 0 0] Well, why are you here? Now, you can answer that question on a number of levels. Why are you here? I don't mean why are you here today. You might be here today because you come here every Sunday.

This is your church, and so it's the normal thing to do, to come. Or you might be here because you want to support the Pattersons on this special day. That's why you're here. But I don't mean that.

And I don't mean why are you here in that existential sense either. Deep question. What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose? What am I about? Where is this world going?

I don't mean why are you here in that existential sense either. And if those are actually your questions, those big questions, then this is the right place for you to be because the Bible is clear and telling us the reason for our existence. What I mean is, no, if you're a Christian believer, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then why are you here? What are you here for? What should you be doing? How should you be living as a Christian? And also, what should we be doing as a church?

What is our mission in this world? Why are we here? Personally, why am I here as an individual? Corporately, why are we here as a church? What is our purpose? What is our task? Because whatever our current role in life is, whether you're attending school, you're studying at university, you're working a full-time job, you're caring for small children, you're moving to another land, or you're enjoying retirement, whatever we do with our days, Jesus tells us here what we are to do with our lives. We'd read his words, Matthew 28, verse 18 to 20, words that have come to be known as the great commission of Jesus. And Jesus tells us why we're here. He tells us what our task is. He tells us what we are to do with our lives. Because this is the calling for every member of Christ's church, for everybody who would say that they are a Christian. So in one way or another, whether at home or abroad, we are in this world to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission, now Overseas Missionary Fellowship, was clear on this. And this is what he said. He said, the great commission is not an option to be considered, it is a command to be obeyed. And yet, whether as individuals or as churches, we can easily water down the words of Jesus.

[2 : 5 1] And we can live our lives as if his great commission is an option rather than a command. Or that it's more for those who go to foreign lands, far, far away, than it is for those of us who stay here.

And so on this special day, when we commission the Patterson family, they need to hear the words of Jesus Christ. Because what he says applies directly to them. But for those of us who aren't going away anywhere soon, we also need to hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, because his great commission applies to us too. This is our task. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are to obey the great commission to go and make disciples of all nations. And so what's the context of the great commission?

Well, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus has completed his mission on earth, his death, and then his resurrection. And these are Jesus's final words before his ascension into heaven. His final words on earth before he goes to heaven. And so the timing of his words is significant and it is strategic.

That's why Jesus brings his disciples together one last time to instruct them on their mission. Because their mission would flow out of his. And so Jesus, in a sense, is giving his marching orders to the church. What the church will do when he is gone. And so we also are involved in this same mission. So notice how the great commission is dominated by the word all. You see up on the screen.

There are four amazing truths that are tied together here by the word all. All authority, all nations, all things, all ways. Literally, it says all the days in verse 20. And so we're going to look at each of these in turn. All authority, all nations, all things, and all ways. So first of all, all authority, Jesus reigns everywhere. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Notice how Jesus states this first before he calls his disciples into mission. He reassures them and he also reassures us of his authority. Jesus reigns supreme. He has dominion over heaven and earth.

[5 : 30] All authority has been given to Jesus by God the Father. So Jesus gave up his life by dying on the cross. It's the core truth of Christianity. And yet God raised him from death and then highly exalted him. So that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And so it's on this basis that Jesus that Jesus has all authority that he commissions his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus sets the agenda for the work that must be done. And we can only go and do it because Jesus has all authority. Being a missionary and going to a foreign land would be crazy if you were not convinced that Jesus has all authority. Otherwise it would be mission impossible.

And yet, because of this truth, it is mission unstoppable. And the reason is because Jesus reigns. Abraham Kuyper, the former Dutch prime minister, said this. 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. And you see, it's because Jesus has all authority and Jesus reigns everywhere that we go into the world in every generation to proclaim the good news about him.

Because there's not a single part of this earth that is not under the authority and the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ. Everywhere belongs to Jesus, which means Jesus has authority over all people in all places who follow all kinds of religions. Jesus has authority over Muslims in Iran, over Hindus in India, over Buddhists and animists in India, over Buddhists in China, over atheists in the UK. All are under the authority of Jesus, whether they know it or not, or like it or not. Jesus has authority over world rulers, heads of state, kings, queens, governments, politicians, over nations like the USA, Russia, China, and everywhere else. Over cities like Glasgow, towns like Gifnick, and villages like Gerlach. They all belong to Jesus. So Jesus has authority over my street, my neighbors, my colleagues, my life, my family, my church. There are no limits to the authority of Jesus. It is universal and it is all-encompassing. And that's why Jesus calls his disciples, his people, to go out into the world to make disciples. In fact, the main verb in these verses is the imperative, make disciples. So making disciples of all nations can only be done because Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. In every place, there will be people who need to know Jesus as Savior and bow to Jesus as Lord. And so whether it's in North Korea or in northwest Glasgow, Jesus sends us, his people, to witness to him, to make disciples. And because Jesus has all authority, it means anyone can be reached for Jesus. So no country is too closed, no people group too hard, no person too evil for Jesus to save.

Isn't that a tremendous encouragement? Whether we're thinking about people in a country far, far away, or whether we're thinking about people up our street, or even in our family, we should never write anyone off. And this truth is a fantastic encouragement when we think that our world is out of control, because it isn't. Jesus has all authority, and Jesus reigns everywhere. That's our first point.

Next slide will show us our second. Second is all nations. We seek everyone. Jesus said, go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Now the word for nations is the Greek word *ethnos*.

[10 : 06] It's where we get our word ethnic or ethnicity from, and it's the word for people groups. And so Jesus expects his people, his church, his kingdom, to be made up of people from every nation on this planet.

And so this is the fulfillment of God's great promise to Abraham way back at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis chapter 12, when he said that all nations of the earth will be blessed through him.

Jesus is saying that it's going to happen as people from everywhere become his disciples. And that's why heaven is going to be one gloriously multicultural family of people.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus gave John a vision of a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the lamb. And they were all crying in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb. That will happen one day, but we're not there yet, are we? That's why there is a need for the great commission. That's why Jesus commands us all to go to all nations and seek everyone for him. So if the word go here is the participle going or as you go, it's got this sense of movement about it because we're going to need to go to all kinds of people if we are to obey Jesus's command. Jesus sends us following his disciples to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

And so what does this look like? Well, it may be partnering with the church in another part of the world. It may be by training and equipping local leaders for pastoral ministry, for church planting, for cross-cultural mission, and in theological education, which is what our friends are going abroad to do. But whether you fly across in a plane to East Asia to live amongst people of another nation, or whether you just walk down the streets of Glasgow and meet people from other nations, we all have a role in making disciples of Jesus Christ. I always find it amazing how many nations live in our city. They come to the UK for education. The largest number of international students in Glasgow come from China. Many people come here for employment. Many end up here as a result of immigration, looking for asylum. But however the nations end up in Glasgow, they are here under the authority of Jesus. And so he must welcome them into our churches, and we must offer them hospitality in our homes as those who know and love Jesus Christ. Because we want them to be disciples of Jesus too, don't we? Just think of the potential for the multiplication of more disciples. So if those from other nations become disciples here, then they become great missionaries to reach those from their own nation with the same ethnic, cultural and linguistic background. And also if they go back home to their homeland, then they are great people, great missionaries to reach those who know nothing of Jesus in their own place.

[13 : 50] They can go there to evangelize and to plant churches and to see the church grow. And it's exciting to be part of Jesus' cross-cultural missionary movement. It's exciting to go, but it's also exciting to stay. And many of us don't even need to leave our city or our street. We might in fact just need to walk across the street to share the good news of Jesus with the people who are there. And so don't Jesus' words here challenge us all, certainly challenge me to get out of our comfort zones to reach culturally different people.

Different in terms of race, religion, language, culture, sexuality, social class, status, age, whatever. Let's not wait for people to walk through our church doors. Our strategy can't just be limited to come and see.

It needs to be go and tell. Tell the good news of Jesus to all people, whether far off or near. And so let's make every effort to befriend all people so we can point them to Jesus.

Jesus calls us to go to all nations and seek everyone. That's our second point. All authority, Jesus reigns everywhere. All nations, we seek everyone. And thirdly, all things, we teach everything.

Jesus said, 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 obey all that I have commanded you.

[15 : 34] We said the command is to make disciples. So just as baptizing implies conversion and inclusion into God's family. So teaching emphasizes that Jesus isn't just looking for converts, but for committed followers. It's a call not just to get people to make decisions for Jesus, but to become disciples of Jesus. And so it's going to take time because disciples need to be taught.

And that's why Jesus sends his disciples out to teach others to observe all that he commanded. Observe means to keep, to guard, to obey. So it's not just teaching what to believe, but how to obey.

Jesus wants disciples who will faithfully follow everything he has said. Everything he commanded for his first disciples, which by implication means everything we find in our Bibles. It is going to take the whole Bible to make a whole disciple. And yet we're well aware that the good news of Jesus often seems like bad news to our culture, to any culture. There's great fear even within the church to teach anything that may offend anyone. And yet a weak message will never grow strong disciples.

That's why our task to teach everything, including the unpopular or the difficult parts of the Christian message is vital. So teaching judgment as well as grace, justice, as well as love, obedience, as well as salvation, hell, as well as heaven, suffering, as well as triumph. We need to be clear on what God says to teach it clearly and to apply it sensitively. So the reality of sin in our hearts needs to be taught and our need for repentance. The inevitability of God's punishment needs to be taught and the prospect of an eternity in hell. The reality that Jesus is the only way to God needs to be taught and that there is no salvation in any other religion. That our gender has been assigned by our loving creator and it isn't a social construct. That God's design for our human sexuality is best for our flourishing as human beings. Because we're never at liberty to gloss over any part of the Bible's teaching. If we want to make disciples to grow healthy churches, that we'll multiply more disciples to grow more healthy churches, to be involved in cross-cultural mission, then we will need to teach everything. And not just preaching on Sundays, but in small groups through the week and in one-to-one relationships. If we're going to reach people who know little or nothing about Jesus Christ, we'll need to invest time in teaching and helping them understand in culturally sensitive ways. So missionary work, church planting, ministry, personal Christian witness means that we are in this for the long haul. There are no shortcuts to being a disciple or to making disciples. Jesus spent three years with his own disciples, investing himself, his life, in teaching them. One of the many things I admire about the Pattersons is their clear desire to follow

God's call and to be ready to stay put where God places them. Because making disciples to multiply more disciples means, in their case, raising up indigenous leaders to take on the training responsibilities for their own church, to send their own people to other nations to make more disciples. And they're aware that that is not going to happen overnight. It is a long-term goal, long-term project. And so for them, but also for you and for me, we have just got to plod on doing what we are doing wherever God has placed us. And obeying the Great Commission by seeking to make disciples for Jesus. So what does that mean? Well, it means investing in people, doesn't it? Continuing to speak for Jesus and live for Jesus before our unbelieving friends and our unbelieving family, our neighbors and colleagues. We can never stop sharing the good news of Jesus. That's what he wants us to do, because he is our only hope for you, for me, for those in other parts of the world.

[20 : 47] Jesus is our hope. So first, all authority. Second, all nations. Third, all things. And fourthly, always are all the days. Jesus said, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Notice that Jesus ends not with a command, but with a fantastic promise to his disciples. After his own death and resurrection, Jesus sends them out as the risen Lord, promising to be with them, and later promising them the Holy Spirit. There is no way that they could go into the world without the presence of Jesus with them. And so the final all here is in this word always, or as the original literally says, all the days. So what it's saying is there's never a day when the presence of Jesus isn't with his people. Jesus is with us now, and he will be with us till the end of the age. And that's why the great commission wasn't just for the disciples of Jesus at the time he said these words, but for his disciples for all time until the end. Jesus wouldn't be talking about the end of the age if his apostles were to fulfill the great commission. But it's clear that he expects the great commission to continue to continue to the end of the age through his people. And so we've got this wonderful assurance that Jesus is with us, just as he was with them. And he always will be. Jesus is promising that when we obey his great commission, he'll be with us through thick and thin. And it gets better because then he'll take us to be with him forever. And so while Matthew ends with Jesus's great commission, the mission of Jesus continues until his return. And so we should be in no doubt why we're here as an individual or as a church. That doesn't mean it's going to be easy. It will always be costly, costly in terms of time, because we must serve, costly in terms of our finances, because we must give, costly in terms of our families, because our children will make sacrifices too. And yet it's a privilege for all of us to count the cost in following Jesus. We're never alone, whatever we are in the world, because Jesus promises to be with us. He'll never abandon us, because he is not joining us on our mission. We are joining him on his. And we know that Jesus will ultimately accomplish his mission. And isn't it amazing that he invites us to join him in his work? That is why we are here. And so we can be confident that Jesus will never leave us high or dry. And we have experienced that here at Christ Church Glasgow as a church plant. And personally, I've experienced this for our family.

And Martin and Jennifer, our prayer for you, as well as Sophia and Joshua and Luke, is that you will experience this continually, too. You already have. We trust that you will. Hudson Taylor, he certainly experienced this. He was passionate about obeying the Great Commission and seeing all of China evangelized. So much so that he started his own mission agency. That's the way to do it, isn't it?

Nobody else is doing it. Well, I'll just start one myself. And he did, to get to all those unreached people in China. So listen to his words as he describes his call. I think he said these words on Brighton Beach. On Sunday, June 25th, 1865, unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security while millions were perishing from lack of knowledge, I wandered out onto the sands alone in great spiritual agony. And there the Lord conquered my unbelief. And I surrendered myself to God for his service. I told him that all the responsibility as to issues and consequences must rest with him. That as his servant, it was mine to obey and to follow him. His to direct, to care for, and to guide me and those who might labor with me. Need I say that peace at once flowed into my burdened heart. I returned home with a heart enjoying such rest as it had been a stranger to for months. And with an assurance that the Lord would bless his own work and that I should share in the blessing. There is nothing more important in life than knowing God through the Lord Jesus

Christ. That's why we're here. God the Father sent God the Son into the world to save us. And when we know forgiveness of our sins through faith in Jesus Christ, he then sends us out into the world.

With his saving message to those who are perishing. And so if you're here this afternoon and you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, then turn to him. Turn away from your sin and trust in him. While there is still time. We don't know how long there will be until Jesus wraps this whole thing up. He has the authority to do it when the time is right. So Jesus Christ is Lord. He came to die for our sins. He rose to rule and he will return to judge. And so everyone who turns from their sins and trusts in him will be saved.

[27 : 27] All authority has been given to Jesus. Jesus reigns everywhere. All nations need to hear about Jesus. We seek everyone. All Jesus commanded needs to be taught. We teach everything. And our confidence is that Jesus is with us forever more. Martin, Jennifer, Christ Church Glasgow, everyone. Let's go for it. Let's go for it.

Thank you for this poem. Let's go for it. Let's go for it. Let's go for it. Let's go for it. Before this poem. Get rid of the house of the food. Let's go for it. Here we go for it. Let's go for it. Let's go for it.

Let's go for it. Let's go for it. Let's go for it. Let's go for it. Olha for it. Let's go for it. For the name and for the sake of the one who came and lived and died. We this loved that heait distances are