

The “ALL’s” of Evangelism

Life on Mission: Go & Multiply

Matthew 28:16-20

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¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:16-20 (ESV)

Introduction

This morning we are starting a short four-week series on evangelism and discipleship called “Life on Mission.” There will be two sermons on evangelism, then Easter, then two sermons on discipleship after Easter. The focus will be on the event we will celebrate in two weeks (and celebrate every Lord’s Day) — The Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Let’s look at Matthew’s last words as they can help us to see some important realities concerning proclaiming the Good News — evangelism.

This week we will look at the passage called the “Great Commission,” found at the end of Matthew. It is a wonderful and challenging text. I am sure most of us have heard this passage preached several times in our lives. I want to focus on one redundant concept in this text. That concept is represented in the word “all.” What does “all” mean? I looked up the word, and the dictionary said it means “the whole quantity or amount, the greatest possible.” The word “all” intends to give the idea of ultimate inclusivity, without excluding anything. Here are some illustrations of “all”: Cathy and I are married, and we have agreed to certain “all” conditions. I have said I will do all the grass cutting — because she is allergic to pollen. That means all the grass in our yard is my domain to cut, and that is true without exception. On the other hand, she does all the laundry — because I am allergic to laundry. That is also her exclusive domain, and she does all the laundry without exception. In this wonderful passage at the end of Matthew’s gospel, the word “all” rings out in beautiful passion for the church of Jesus.

In Matthew 28:18-20 we will see four significant “all’s” that are the basis for evangelism

I. ALL #1—All authority goes to Jesus for evangelism, v. 18

Matthew’s gospel ends like the other three gospels, with a record of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy of Jesus and connects Him to the great king of Israel, David. In the end Matthew returns to the kingly motif as he records a profound statement of Jesus in verse 18 where Jesus says very briefly “all authority on heaven and on earth has been given to

me.” That is an ambitious and audacious statement. It is bold and presumptuous. It is one to ponder and consider as to its ramifications. Here are a few observations concerning this verse:

1. **What does He mean when he says He has authority?**

That is a great question. In Rome, and in most times in history, authority is synonymous with “power.” If you have power, you have authority. So Rome took over Palestine and much of the known world, not because they had the authority or the “right to rule” there but because they were stronger and more powerful than anyone else. Their authority was derived from their ability to defeat opposition. This concept was seen in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:47) when the crowd from the Jewish rulers wanted to take Jesus. They had no authority to take Him, so they brought clubs and swords to take Him by power. Peter tried to match their power and cut off a man’s ear. Jesus said in a statement of strength-comparison (26:53) that He could get more than 12 legions (about 72,000) of angels if He wanted. The obvious inference was that a force like that would be unstoppable. If power were the only issue in authority, Jesus would be able to coerce all to do His bidding by sheer power. He could wipe out all of humanity if power was the leading characteristic of His kingdom. The world often determines authority by power to ultimately destroy if necessary, but Jesus’ authority was based on His ability to return to life **in resurrection**.

2. **Why does He have authority now?**

As we saw from Matthew, Jesus did not need more power to have authority. He had access to angel power, which was much more powerful than even atomic power. So what gives Him the right to rule, and what gives Him authority? The passage in Matthew 28 gives the answer in the beginning of the chapter. In verse 6 the angel says the obvious: “He is risen.” In a concise sentence the angel spoke immense truth. Jesus had conquered the greatest foe on earth — death. Death lost and Jesus won. He was the conquering victor over evil and death. Death is dead! So why does Jesus have authority? It would seem inarguable that the one who conquers death has the right to rule. He is risen. You could say *didn’t He have authority before?* and the answer is yes (in a sense). So what is different? In His death and resurrection, Jesus now has the right to grant forgiveness of sin and resurrection to life. Before His own death and resurrection, He would not have had authority to grant eternal life.

3. **How far does His authority extend?**

This is where the word “all” comes into play. His authority extends to all of the cosmos — earth and heaven. That could either refer to the realm of all of creation, as in Genesis 1, or it could refer to the spiritual and physical realm. I think it is probably both. There is no domain over which Jesus does not have authority. All of heaven and earth is in His ruling realm because he created both, and now (in Matthew 28) He provided for earth’s redemption.

4. **Is there any opposition?**

You would think there would be no opposition to such a wonderful reality of resurrection. It would be better than the fountain of youth. But immediately after the resurrection, the forces of evil went to work to lie and deceive humans. Some said His disciples stole the body, even though they knew it was false. Some just flat out disbelieved (v. 17). Why? Because the God of this world blinded their eyes to the greatest reality in the history of the world.

Application

So what does this mean today? Do you believe that all authority is given to Jesus in heaven and earth? Do you live like you believe it? Here are some tests:

- a. We need to have a renewed vision of who Jesus is. Easter matters! He is Lord of all! We need to exalt Him in our hearts and lives and not buy the lie that we are king, or that the government is king, or that the educators or financiers or whoever have authority. It is all His. What a blessing to believe in the all-sufficiency of the One who has all authority.
- b. Have you come to a place where you have put your faith in Jesus as your Savior, or are you keeping authority over your own life? Come to faith in Jesus today.
- c. Do you find yourself falling into sin repeatedly as if sin reigns in your body? Do you struggle with lust, pornography, envy, pride, jealousy, fear, etc.? Do you think that you cannot overcome such besetting sins? Confess your sin of unbelief. We need to believe that the risen Jesus is Lord and that He has all authority in all areas of life. We can overcome sin because of the crucified and risen Lord.
- d. Do you question your situation in life? Do you wish you were older or younger or richer or smarter or married or unmarried or white or black or whatever? Do you think God made a mistake in your life? Confess your sin of unbelief. We all need to bow our knees and recognize that all authority is His.
- e. Do you struggle with health issues? Those are very difficult, and even in that, God is the Lord. Confess your sin of unbelief. The Lord of heaven and earth will eventually come from heaven with a shout and will make all right. That is assured by His resurrection. We need to trust that He really has ALL authority in heaven and earth.

II. All #2—Go and make disciples/ evangelize to ALL nations, v.19a

After asserting the important statement of authority, Jesus then makes an authoritative statement. He tells His disciples that there is work to do. The little word, “therefore” is always important. Jesus is basing His coming command on the preceding statement of His authority. If He has authority, then listen to and obey His command.

He proceeds to state two verb forms that are to be read in tandem. He says “go” and “make disciples.” For those of you who are grammar students, “go” is a participle and is so closely connected with the

main verb of “make disciples” that it carries an imperative thrust. So Jesus is telling His followers to get going and to make more disciples.

Some may say, “Where do we go to make these disciples?” In the first century, some probably would have thought that you would go to the Jews and make disciples. Jesus clearly debunks that theory and says to go to ALL nations, not just to one nation, but to all of them! This actually fulfills the promise to Abraham, who was told that in his seed “all the nations of the earth would be blessed.” (Gen. 12:1-3) The call is to go out and spread the good news. Jesus saves, and we need to follow this One who has all authority.

How are we to see these nations? Certainly it is to mean to all the ends of the earth. The early disciples were to go beyond the borders of Israel and to make disciples of Gentiles and those who had never heard of Jesus. That is true today as well. In November I went to India with a group from College Park and saw people who were different than me and who were all about going to the nations. The southern Indians have a heart for the unreached people in northern India and were sacrificing much to make disciples of the nations. We are blessed at College Park to be well informed in our quest to reach the nations and that includes all the nations, even those in our back yard. We have the nations at universities downtown. We have Muslim neighbors in Carmel who wonder if Christians hate them. We have opportunities closer than we may think to reach the nations.

I also wonder if it would be fair to say that “all” the nations could include what Jesus said just as He was ascending to heaven. He wanted His disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. I wonder if “all” nations can include those regions. Do we see the mission field in our own homes? Our children, cousins, nephews, and nieces need Jesus. Dads need to be working to see our children becoming followers of Jesus. We also need to look into our neighborhoods to see the people needing Jesus. We need to reflect on “all nations” as we deal with ethnic diversity at our church. We have a group that meets next Sunday during the third hour to talk about how we can show unity in our own ethnic diversity as a testimony that the gospel is for all ethnic groups. Here is a challenge for all of us this Easter season: Ask God to put one person’s name on your mind and heart to share the gospel with this season. Maybe invite them to church on Easter, or better yet, share the gospel and then invite them. The risen Lord has given us a command: Make disciples of ALL Nations!

III. All #3—Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe ALL that I commanded you, vv. 19b-20a

Now this making disciples of all nations could sound like a complicated thing. How do we make disciples? The text gives two words to help describe the idea of making disciples. The words are simply “baptizing” and “teaching.”

1. **Baptizing**

This is an interesting concept. Baptism is not new in Matthew. John the Baptizer got his title from baptizing people. Jesus was baptized. The idea behind baptism is identification and union with something or someone. John's baptism is identifying with sinners and was a baptism of a repentant sinner. Here the idea of baptism is union with the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It comes from identify with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. Since Jesus redeemed us, we can be in union with God Himself. What a wonderful truth. In 1:12 of his gospel, John says that "as many as received him to them he gave the authority (this same word describes Jesus in Matt 28:18) to become Sons of God." Baptism is an outward sign of an inward salvation and conversion. When a person comes to Jesus in salvation, they will be baptized as an outward sign of that inward union. Oh, that we would see more baptisms here at College Park. Not just for numbers but for the glory of God and the good of the people. Let's up our efforts to share the gospel in evangelism so that more disciples will follow the Lord and be baptized. The theme of "all" carries to baptism. We need to be baptizing believers, whether red, yellow, black or white, whether young or old. ALL nations is the goal; we must not miss anyone as we spread the gospel.

2. **Teaching**

This is not a complicated word or concept. Baptism seems to represent the disciples' initiation to the faith (it does not save, but it represents salvation). Teaching is the ongoing work of growth and learning. The teaching is to include everything that Jesus has commanded. That is the task of discipleship. We are to teach about and learn of Jesus. We had a granddaughter born on February 12 of this year. Cathy and I went to meet this little girl named Grace to get to know her. We spent four days in diligent data gathering. What is she interested in? Why is she crying? Why doesn't she wake up and play? We wanted to know everything about her, and we became students of her.

It would seem that if we are committed in faith to Jesus, we would want to know all we can about Him. We need to get into His Word to know Him. IF you are not in His Word, try this: There are 14 days before Easter; read two chapters each day, starting on Monday, from the gospel of Matthew, and you will end up on this passage on Easter Sunday. Read with the desire to know all that God commands you. When you learn about Jesus, you will find things that may be counter-cultural, such as His view of marriage, the sinfulness of humanity, the need for grace, etc. We need to follow "ALL" that the king commands.

IV. **ALL #4—I am with you always (literally ALL the days), v.20b**

The last sentence in this gospel is so wonderfully encouraging. Jesus gives His disciples a charge or commission. He could have ended it there. He asserts His sovereign authority and could have concluded with "get busy." He adds the encouraging reality that He is with them. The translations do not reflect the original language, which says that Jesus will be with them ALL THE DAYS! The word "all" comes into play again. It is all the days, without exclusion. There were some hard days for those men. Just read Acts and you can see them beaten, mocked, and even killed for Jesus. It is similar to

the Psalm 23, where the psalmist says goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life and he will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Jesus is that goodness and mercy, and He will never leave His followers. We have that assurance as we go on our mission to follow Him.

SO WHAT?

As we conclude our study of this familiar text, allow the Spirit of God to work in your heart. See the “all inclusive” beauty of Jesus:

1. Give your life wholly to Jesus, who has **ALL authority**. Kids, parents, all people, submit to Jesus and to His authority in life
2. Give your life to **ALL Nations** in evangelism. Before Easter, share the gospel with at least one person
3. Give your life to following Jesus and to making followers of **ALL Jesus commanded**. Let’s fill up this baptismal pool (with you or with those whom you have led to Jesus at home, work, play, or across the world). Let’s also be good students of Jesus by getting into the Word now! Read Matthew before Easter on March 27.
4. Thank Jesus that He is with you **ALL the days**. Find courage to witness in any circumstance.

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