

## **What's in Your Wallet? -Powerful Discipleship**

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**Matthew 28: 16-20 The Great Commission.** *"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

The story is told about an old Native American who attended a church service one Sunday morning.

The preacher's message lacked real spiritual food, so he did a lot of shouting and pulpit pounding to cover up his lack of preparation. In fact, as it is sometimes said, he "preached up quite a storm."

After the service, someone asked the visitor, who was a Christian, what he thought of the minister's message. Thinking for a moment, he summed up his opinion in six words: "High wind. Big thunder. No rain." Hopefully today's message will not be all hot air and hyperbole. Maybe we can advocate for results, like rain, the rain of the Holy Spirit to fill us, to encourage us to go and to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to be obedient in the power of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This text out of the Gospel of Matthew may be familiar to some. It is called the Great Commission passage. You know, the one where Jesus has been previously resurrected from the dead and the disciples, all 11 of them minus Judas Iscariot, go back to their home territory of Galilee, and they go to the mountain that Jesus has directed them. The mountain is most likely located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near the town of Capernaum.

Commissioning means giving authority and power, acting as an agent for another under their authority.

We speak today about what we carry in our spiritual wallet. What do we carry with us everywhere we go? A debit and credit card, a driver's license, maybe a picture, or health card, and the Christ. What? Do we carry Jesus with us? And is outreach and discipleship something that we have failed to pick up and bring with us, everywhere, everyday?

Today is Father's Day. A day we honor our Dad, grandpas; men who were role models, father like figures that we love and admire. My Dad typically was on his way to work by 8AM, home by 5:30pm, changed into "yard clothes" as he called them, and then spent time working in our large yard in San Antonio every evening. Dad was an orderly step by step guy. Rake leaves, bag leaves, haul leaves to curb. Fertilize 4 times a year, mow yard at proper height, adjusting mower height every 6 weeks. Dad was all about planned orderliness. He would say, "Jerry, failing to have a plan, you can plan to fail."

Although Dad was lousy at home repairs like plumbing, he always had a plan...for someone. Usually me. "Jerry, give that faucet a tap and turn the wrench and" ...you get the idea.

Something interesting about this Gospel text today. It is an orderly and step by step process of marching orders so to speak for the disciples, about how to carry out their next portion of their mission.

Matt. 28: 16 finds the disciples being obedient. They went to Galilee as instructed, to the mountain Jesus had told them to go to.

"When they saw him, (Jesus) they worshiped him." They recognized the risen resurrected Christ, so they saw and then they worshipped. ..".But ...some doubted." We don't know who doubted. I seriously doubt that it was Didymus, who was called doubting Thomas. Thomas was out of the Upper Room the first time Jesus appeared to the hiding Disciples.

The other disciples must have been chomping at the bit to tell Thomas what he had missed. Can you imagine the conversation and energy of anticipation? "Thomas, what took so long? We saw the rabbi. He was here. Yes...Jesus. I saw him, we all did!"

And then Thomas makes his statement, I won't believe until I have placed my fingers in the wounds on his side and his hands. Ahhh Thomas, you good skeptic you. But then a week later Thomas meets the resurrected Lord and knows that it is Jesus. No, i doubt that Thomas doubted at this time in today's text.

How those disciples missed it, right? They see Jesus, know he is resurrected, they worship him, and then some...doubt." Wow. Sounds like us at times. Like you at times. Like me at times.

It's easy for us to want to slam the disciples and to say negatives about them. But people of God, "doubt" means that the church is not perfect. There is not one person at LRUMC or any church anywhere in the world that has a perfect person in it. Only Jesus was that perfect human.

I find it fascinating that so many folks say, "Preacher I'd go to your church, but there are too many hypocrites in it." What? You mean that you only want to be in a church with perfect people? Wow, your sins and fallible humanness would really stand out. It's like putting on white gloves and then wiping your hand across an open bag of charcoal. It would be obvious.

The church is a hospital for sinners. We are in need of repair, restoration of relationship. We are in need of forgiveness and healing. How many of us have been wronged here? Let's see your hands. How many have wronged another?

We are no different than the disciples who worshipped, and doubted. We are the same way.

Whatever the nature of the resurrection event that occurred, it did not generate perfect faith even in those who experienced it first time.

Look people of God, the Great Commission is NOT entrusted to some holy heavenly angels or to some perfect believer. No, the Gospel story and message of love, mercy, forgiveness, acceptance and grace is entrusted to a worshipping and wavering community of disciples. That is us.

It is important to note that when we read the text, Jesus did not focus on doubt or unbelief. It does not say that. He walked with the two men on the road to Emmaus. Men who did not recognize Jesus until the breaking of the bread together. Jesus is not focusing on the unbelief or doubt of people.

We sometimes say, "Seeing is believing." Well the disciples were different. They have their doubts but they have doubt dispelled by HEARING, not seeing. In Mathew 4:23 Jesus travels to towns and villages and preaches and teaches in the synagogues declaring the message of the Gospel. His spoken word holds power. Not the evidence of a demanded miracle performed.

Jesus comes to the disciples, instead of them coming to him. Jesus is essentially coming to his wavering church. His only action is to speak. Hear verse 18, "and Jesus came and said to them, **all** authority in heaven and on earth had been given to me."

Not a portion, not a fraction, **ALL**. When you go to work for a company or a new boss, you want to know the answer to these questions. Who has the power to make things happen? Who has the power to give me a raise? Who has the power to allow me vacation or days off? Who can say yes, and who can say no and it cannot be overturned by anyone else.

We want to know, just like the disciples did. Jesus reiterates to them that he has every last bit of authority on earth, and IN heaven. There is no one else. He is the one who is the final word. This baby born in a manger and

worshipped by Gentiles, this King of the Jews mocked and reviled at his crucifixion, the lowly Son of Man has been enthroned and is now exalted as the Son of Man.

The resurrection day of Jesus is his vindication and his enthronement. He is God's representative and therefore there is no competition between God as king, and the authority of Jesus.

I am good with all of that so far. But at verse 19 it gets a bit, well, personal. Jesus says, "Go." It's okay to say, 'You over there, you go do that. But me, God. What will you have to go do? The Great Commission by its very nature is over arching. All of us as Christians are to play a part in spreading the Gospel of Christ. All of us have different gifts that God gives us. All of us are to use our spiritual gifts to bring the Kingdom of God to the world. All of us.

I hear your minds right now. "Jerry I am not a preacher. I don't speak in public. I don't want to do foreign mission. Etc. But you are missing the point. The disciples hesitated and doubted. They didn't bail on Jesus. They acknowledged doubt but were faithful. Just as so many of all of you here are. The word "**therefore**" in the Bible is a road sign. It could say. "Hey, pay attention. Look what is next." GO and Make disciples of all nations.

What does that mean? If you have a shot gun approach to discipleship we'll be all over the map, ineffective, doing double duty, re-inventing the wheel over and over again. Discipleship is like one on one mentoring. It is personal, it is time consuming, and it requires investment of ourselves. We are not talking about preaching to 20,000 people in a stadium and expecting that that is discipleship. Disciples are made one at a time.

Jesus uses Father /Son language that emphasizes the relationship between the disciples and the Christ. As Christians we are sons and daughters of God the Father. Jesus is merciful and we too are called to be merciful. Jesus is compassionate and we are called to feed the least the lost, look after the widow and orphan, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked."

Making disciples is what each of us can do in some small way. Telling someone about your church, your faith, your story, your transformed life through Jesus. That is a start to discipleship.

The Gospel, of Christ is not restricted to the US or Canada. The fastest growing regions in the world with explosive Christianity are found in Asia and in Africa. Thousands are coming to Christ each week.

Pastors baptize these new believers not in the name of a politician or country, not in the name of success or financial wealth, but in the name of the triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus gives his disciples the orders that say, "teach and obey everything I have commanded you. Not most of the things I told you, but everything."

The very word **disciple** comes from the Greek word **paedeia**. It means one who learns, a learner. I remember a camping trip with my Dad in the Indian Guides through the YMCA. We camped out in some hot sticky kind of swampy place with other fathers and son, and had a blast. We got eaten up by chiggers, hobbled around with blisters, got mosquito bit and sunburned. It was memorable because dad had a willing pupil. He taught me how to sharpen a knife properly, and how to start a fire with a flint, steel wool and twigs. It was great. But I didn't learn everything all at once.

Jesus Christ gives each of us a charge, a commission. We commissioned the Four Corner Missionaries two weeks ago for short term missionary service. Jesus is commissioning each of you, each of us, to a life time of being a learner, and a teacher.

Disciples do not live for themselves. Jesus calls us by name, to be in his service in our specific and God gifted tasks. We follow, as disciples, as life long learners, the King of Kings, the Lord of lords that raises his people to be a people of compassionate power, healing mercy, healthy community and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ not with words of condemnation and shame, not with words that guilt us or foment unworthiness.

No, we serve a God who brings our salvation to reality, a Lord who wants the best for his people, and in the midst of trial, walks with us in our very suffering. We walk with and sit at the feet of Jesus the Christ who in his mercy and grace, took my sins, and offered me new, and abundant life eternal, if I would just ask Him to be my Lord.

This is an exciting commission. This is a lifelong commission and charge from the Christ who tells us in an orderly fashion;  
Go-make disciples-baptize in the name of the triune God, teach and remember.

Today on this Fathers day, what a wonderful day for each of us to commit or recommit to our heavenly Father. Let us be disciple makers. Will you in the way that God has prepared you, Go, make disciples

Teach and remember all that Christ has done for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May we pray together?

