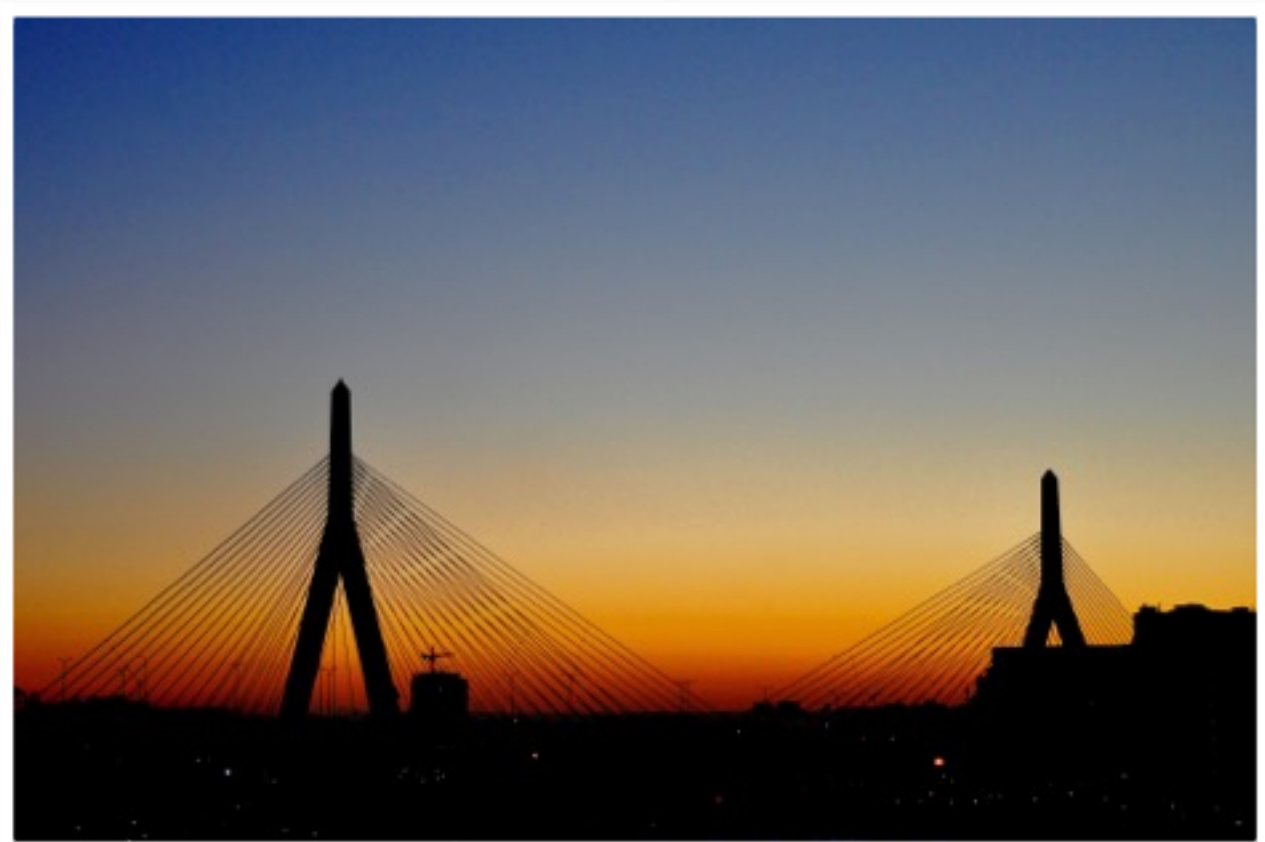


Hope Christian Church
D. Todd Cravens
3 April 2016

Sermon Series: *Jesus Said What?*



Go Make Disciples of All Nations

(Matthew 28:16-20 ESV)

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Introduction

This morning we will step back into our “Jesus said what?” sermon series and we’ll focus on something Jesus said to his disciples after his resurrection. These are the final words of Jesus recorded in the gospel of Matthew.

During the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus explained to them how the events of the next few days would unfold. He predicted that they would flee from him and be scattering, Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s denial, his death, and his resurrection. He also told them that after he was resurrected from the dead that he would go ahead of them and meet them on a certain mountain in Galilee.¹

The disciples believed him and obeyed him. They made the 75 mile journey from Jerusalem to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had told them about. There on that mountain they waited to meet the risen Jesus.



Matthew 28:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

Two Responses to Jesus

In verse 17, Matthew tells us that there were two responses within the disciples when they saw Jesus. Put yourself in their shoes. If you were to see alive a guy you had watched die, what would be your responses? The first response was worship and the second was doubt.

When They Saw Him They Worshipped Him

The first response of these eleven at the sight of the resurrected Jesus is to worship him.

Matthew 28:17 (ESV)

“When they saw him they worshiped him...”

The word ‘worship’ (Greek προσκυνέω *proskyenō*) means “to express by attitude and... position one’s allegiance to and regard for deity—to prostrate oneself in worship, to bow down and worship, to worship.”² This tells us that the disciples understand that Jesus is not a mere man. He is deity. Jesus is God. Worship is the appropriate response when in the

¹ Mt 26:32; Mk 14:28.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 539.

presence of God. Jesus is, in the words of the famous doubter, Thomas, “My Lord and my God!”³ He is completely human, for he died. Yet he is also completely divine, for he rose from the dead. Worship is their instinctive first response at seeing the resurrected Jesus walking toward them.

When They Saw Him...Some Doubted

Their second response is doubt. One of the reasons I trust the Bible is because the difficult texts are not washed out. The hard texts are included. The Biblical text is raw and rugged. If someone was just making this stuff up, why would he include how often the disciples doubted Jesus and didn’t understand him? Yet here Matthew records that “**some doubted.**”

Why would he record this? Why does Matthew want us to know this? Why would the Holy Spirit move Matthew to recall and write this? We’re not even told who was doubting. We are only told that “**some doubted.**” Was it Thomas again? Or was it Matthew himself? There were at least two, for ‘some’ is more than one. It doesn’t matter who doubted, but the Holy Spirit wants us to know that some of the eleven were doubting the resurrection of Jesus.

This seems quite normal in light of the stunning nature of the events that unfolding before them. Doubt seems to be hard-wired into our souls, doesn’t it? Doubting God’s power and ability to do the impossible has its roots back to the beginning of time when our first parents, Adam & Eve, doubted God’s word in the Garden of Eden. They doubted his goodness. They thought he was keeping something good from them. In our fallen nature we are doomed to doubt.

Here the disciples are standing in front of the risen Jesus, whose wounds were still visible, and yet some of them were doubting. Some of them still couldn’t fully believe what they were witnessing. Luke records the doubts on another occasion when Jesus appeared to them.

Luke 24:36-43 (ESV)

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

Some of the disciples were so happy at seeing Jesus that they couldn’t believe that what they were seeing was actually happening. They thought it was too good to be true. They had

³ Jn 20:28.

hoped that Jesus was the messiah and yet not understanding that his death was part of God's plan of redemption, they couldn't fully accept that all they were witnessing was reality.

Do You Have Doubts?

Is this similar to your experience? Do you have doubts about the miracles you read in Scripture? Do you doubt the resurrection of Jesus? Do you struggle with some of the teaching in the Bible? Do you have doubts about God? Do you have doubts about whether or not the Bible is true? Do you have doubts about God's promises? Do you sometimes have doubts that creep up even while you're in the middle of worship? These eleven disciples were worshipping Jesus and even as they worshiped him, "*some doubted.*"

Maybe this is you. You've come here to worship, and yet somewhere within you there are doubts. Doubters, you are welcome in this church. If you are a doubter, then I'm glad you're here. Notice how Jesus responded to the doubts of the disciples. He tells them to trust their senses.

"See my hands and my feet.." Trust your eyes. It's really me. I'm risen.

"Touch me..." Here, grab my hand. Feel my flesh and my bones. I'm risen. I'm not a spirit.

Remember that I died. Look at my hands and feet. See the wounds that caused me death. Now, give me something to eat. Watch me chew and swallow.

Jesus gave them evidence in order to take away their doubts. If you doubt him, ask him to show himself to you. Today, right now, in your heart (not out loud, but silently in your own soul), humbly ask God to reveal himself to you. Just say,

Jesus, I'm struggling to believe in you. It's hard to accept that you rose from the dead. But I humbly ask you to show me that you are real and that you are alive and truly are the Son of God. Show me, please, that the Bible is true. Please, Jesus, help me overcome my doubts.

An Incredible Claim

As the disciples sat together on this mountain, waiting for Jesus, he arrived. He walked up to them and said what may be one of the most incredible claims any man has ever uttered.

Matthew 28:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

This is an utterly amazing statement. Let me read it again, just to make sure you heard this correctly. "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*" You can't help but ask

the question, "*Jesus said what?*" Who does he think he is? Who on earth talks like this? Who would ever make such a claim? What does he mean?

The word 'authority' here (Greek ἐξουσία, *exousia*) means the "right... and power to act, possess, control, use, or dispose of, something or somebody."⁴ It is "the right to do something or the right over something,"⁵ Simply speaking, 'authority' is "the right and the power to have your subordinates do what you choose for them to do."⁶ Jesus is here claiming that everyone and everything is subordinate to him. **He is claiming universal sovereignty.**

This is the kind of ultimate authority which we would understand to belong only to God. And yet he is also here claiming that he has been *given* this authority. Presumably this means that it has been given to him by God the Father. This is not the first time Jesus has said something like this. Jesus made similar claims throughout his ministry. At the very beginning of his ministry he said,

(John 3:35 ESV)

³⁵ *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.*

The authority of Jesus was demonstrated throughout his ministry. He demonstrated his authority over all disease and sickness.⁷ He healed every kind of sickness and disease he encountered. He healed leprosy⁸, fever⁹, paralysis¹⁰, the inability to speak, hearing loss¹¹, and even blindness.¹²

He exercised authority over demons, even two thousand of them at one time.¹³ He commanded them to leave and they always obeyed.¹⁴ All fallen spiritual beings, including the devil are subject to the authority of Jesus. There is not one instance in the Bible where any demon or devil disobeyed Jesus. No evil spiritual being, however strong they may be, has any authority greater than Jesus.

⁴ J. I. Packer, "Authority," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 105.

⁵ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 562.

⁶ John Piper, *What Jesus Demands of the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 364.

⁷ Mt 4:23.

⁸ Lk 17:12-14.

⁹ Mt 8:14-15.

¹⁰ Mt 9:6-7.

¹¹ Mk 7:31-35.

¹² John 9:1-7.

¹³ Mk 5:8-13.

¹⁴ Mk 1:27.

His unique authority was evident in his teaching. He taught with a kind of authority that was unknown among other teachers of his day.¹⁵ He had authority over the natural elements of this world. He commanded the wind and the waves and they obeyed him.¹⁶ He prayed and a sack lunch comprised of a couple of fish and a couple of small loaves of bread was expanded to feed 5,000 people.

Jesus even has authority to forgive sins, which only God can do.¹⁷ Jesus even claimed authority over who is allowed to know God the Father and who is not.

(Matthew 11:27 ESV)

²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

These are incredible claims. Jesus even claimed authority over life and death.¹⁸ Jesus gave the word and three people who were dead were brought back to life.¹⁹ He possessed authority to lay down his own life and to take it up again. He chose the moment of his death and he chose when he rose from the dead.²⁰

Jesus even claimed to have authority over eternal life. On the night before he was crucified, he prayed these words:

(John 17:1-2 ESV)

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Jesus not only has authority over physical life, he also has authority over spiritual life. Furthermore, Jesus has authority over final judgment.²¹

(John 5:22 ESV)

²² The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

¹⁵ Mk 1:27; Mt 7:28-29.

¹⁶ Mt 14:24; Mk 4:39; Lk 8:24.

¹⁷ Mt 9:2-8; Lk 7:48.

¹⁸ Jn 5:26.

¹⁹ Lk 7:14-15; Mk 5:41-42; Jn 11:41-44.

²⁰ Jn 10:17-18; cf. Mt 27:50.

²¹ Acts 17:31.

(John 5:27 ESV)

²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

(Acts 10:42 ESV)

⁴² And [God] commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that [Jesus] is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

(2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

There is no realm, whether physical or spiritual, over which Jesus does not possess sovereign authority. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. Every man and every animal is subject to his authority, along with every angel and every demon. There is nothing outside his authority. His authority extends over every molecule and every mountain, over every family and over every nation. This universal authority is the basis upon which Jesus makes a universal command.

A Universal Command

Next we turn to a universal command.

Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ "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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Jesus gives a command to "***make disciples of all nations.***" Notice the word '***therefore***' in v.19. The basis of the command to "go make disciples of all nations" is grounded upon his possession of universal authority. It is because of his sovereign authority that he has the right and the power to give the command. Jesus has authority over the whole planet, and therefore he yearns to have disciples from all nations.

This is why Christians have the right to cross cultures and confront untruth and idolatry and introduce unbelievers to the truth that the only way to God is through Jesus. Without the universal authority of Jesus, we would have no right to cross cultures on the mission to spread the good news of the gospel around the globe.

Notice the repetition of the word 'all.' Jesus possesses all authority, therefore he wants disciples from all nations, who obey all of his commands, and he is with his servants all the days. All is the dominate theme of these three verses.

Make Disciples

Jesus commands his followers to **go make disciples of all nations**. There are two aspects that Jesus mentions concerning making disciples; baptism and teaching.

Disciples Are Taught

Notice that Jesus is interested in disciples, not converts. A disciple is “someone who follows another person... and who submits himself to the... teaching of that leader.”²² A disciple is a student, a follower. Notice verse 20. Becoming a disciple involves,

Matthew 28:20 (ESV)

²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

A disciple is one who is taught a way of life and willingly commits to live according to what he or she has been taught. The disciples of Jesus are to be taught all that he commanded. Jesus wants disciples, not converts. You can't be a disciple without submitting your life to the teaching of the master. This requires that the follower be instructed. This is why teaching is such a regular and consistent part of the Christian faith. This is what Jesus commands for his followers.

A disciple must consistently place himself or herself under the teaching of the master. We tend to think that becoming a convert is an instantaneous decision that one makes and then it's over. “Here read this book, sign this form, pray this prayer, and now you're a convert. Welcome to the Christian faith. Now you're in.” If making “converts” is what we believe we're called to do, then we can come across as spiritual bullies. This is not what Jesus is commanding. He says, “make disciples.” A disciple is one who consistently sits under the teaching of Jesus over a period of time and then lives obediently to his commands by choosing to submit his will to the commands of Jesus every day. A disciple is a person who, indeed makes a decision, but discipleship extends far beyond an initial decision and on into every day of his or her life.

Disciples Are Baptized

The second aspect of being a disciple of Jesus is baptism. This is part of Jesus' teaching. He teaches that all of his disciples are to be baptized. Which disciples are to be baptized? The ones who can understand his teaching. The disciples taught that those who are to be baptized are those who look to Jesus for salvation and commit their lives to following him.

The first time we see baptism in Scripture, it is by John the Baptist and he baptizes people as they confess their sins.²³ Baptism then, in its most fundamental symbolism, is a visible

²² Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 384.

²³ Mt 3:11.

portrayal of the invisible act of having all your sins washed away and being forgiven. Thus, those who should be baptized are persons who are old enough to know they are sinners and understand their need to have their sins forgiven by looking to Jesus. This eliminates infants. Infants do not know they are sinners and neither can they exercise faith by looking to Jesus for salvation.

Jesus commands that baptism be performed in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, since all three are at work in effecting our salvation. It is the Father who sent the Son into the world as Savior, it is the Son who died and rose again to atone for sin and give the gracious gift of righteousness, and it is the Holy Spirit who awakens our dead souls to the reality of our sin and our great need of a Savior and then gives us the ability to call out to Jesus for forgiveness. All three persons of God's eternal nature are involved in the salvation of all who trust in Jesus.

An Unshakable Comfort

Finally, we see his unshakable comfort.

Matthew 28:20 (ESV)

²⁰ *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

The one who speaks an incredible claim and a universal command, also speaks unshakable comfort. Jesus gets very personal here. *"Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* There is never a time when Jesus is not with his disciples. He is with you, literally, "all the days." Every day Jesus is with his disciples, no matter what the day holds.

Jesus is with his disciples when the day is sunny. He is with his disciples when it is raining. He is with disciples on day of blessing and on the day when the world will curse them. Jesus is with us right here and right now. He is with us in this room. He is with his disciples when they are in the crowds and he is with them when they are alone at home, weeping in secret, with the pillow over your face so no one will hear. Jesus is with his disciples always.

He is with you on the train and at work. He is with you in sickness and in health. He is with his disciples in the day of joy and in the day of death. There is never a day when Jesus is not with his disciples. He is with his disciples in America and he is with his disciples in China. He is with his disciples in Bangladesh and in Benghazi. Jesus is with his disciples in grade school and in graduate school.

Jesus is always with his disciples, even to the very end of the age. This might be one of the sweetest verses in the Bible.

Conclusion

Are you one of his disciples? Did you worship him today?

Are you a doubter? Do doubts dominate your soul?

Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. He has universal authority. There is no one in the whole created universe who has more authority than him. He has given us a command to make disciples of Jesus by teaching them to obey everything he commanded and by baptizing them. And the central truth Jesus wants every disciple to know is that he is always with us, even to the end of the age.

If you are a disciple of Jesus, then live according to this incredible claim of Jesus. Obey this universal command and remind yourself every day of this unshakable comfort.