

The Great Commission

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help this morning, and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 28, page 1007 in the Pew Bible.
- Matthew, chapter 28, and if we read again at verse 16, where it's titled, The Great Commission. It says there, For now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.
- And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 observe all that I have commanded you.
- And behold, I am with you always. To the end of the age. Have you ever sat in church and wondered why we do what we do?
- Why is it that we do certain things in a certain way? Is it because we've always done it this way? Is it because of tradition that was handed down by elders who lived centuries ago?
- [1 : 2 2] Is it because the minister says that this is the way it has to be? Or is it because, well, we want to do it this way? Why do we do certain things in a certain way?
- Or is it the reason why we do what we do? Is it because the Bible instructs us and it directs us to do so? And of course, we know that the Bible, which is the word of God, it's the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.
- Therefore, what we do in church and why we do what we do in church, it must be in accordance with the Bible. We must have a scriptural warrant for everything we do in the church of Jesus Christ.
- Because to divert from the inspired and inerrant word of God, it would only leave us liable to error. And so everything we do in church, the way we worship, the way we conduct ourselves, the way we live our lives as Christians, it must be in accordance with the teaching of the Bible.
- And with that in mind, the passage which we've come to this morning, Matthew chapter 28, this is our scriptural warrant for the sacrament of baptism.
- [2 : 3 8] There are only two sacraments which are instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the sacrament of baptism. And just to note, the word sacrament, you won't find it in the Bible.
- It's a Latin word, meaning the Latin word sacramentum. And it means solemn oath. The word sacrament means solemn oath.
- And that's true because in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, those who come forward, those who come and sit at the Lord's table, they're not only proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes, but they're also solemnly taking an oath before God that they will live their lives in submission to Jesus Christ, to his church, and to the teaching of the Bible.

But in the sacrament of baptism, and in the case of baptizing a child, which we're doing this morning, the parents are making the solemn oath before God that they will bring up the child in the visible church and teach their child to live in submission to Jesus Christ and to his church and to the teaching of the Bible.

And that's what we see here in the closing verses of Matthew's Gospel. We see the scriptural warrant for the sacrament of baptism. And we see that baptism, it was God's plan for the church because the command to baptize, as we can see here, it was given by Jesus to the disciples.

[4 : 10] And so all I want us to ask this morning is the very simple question, what is baptism? Now I'm not going to give a treatise on the position of pedo-baptism.

That's not what I'm going to do. All I want us to do is ask, what is baptism? And I want us to see that baptism is a call to rejoice, it's a command to repent and a commission to reach out.

Baptism is a call to rejoice, a command to repent and a commission to reach out. So if we look first of all at a call to rejoice, baptism is a call to rejoice.

Look at verse 16 again. But it says, Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him.

But some doubted. And so this section, titled The Great Commission, it concludes Matthew's Gospel. But as we know, there are four Gospels, four Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

[5 : 17] And what's remarkable about each of these Gospel writers is that even though they're all eyewitnesses of the same thing, each of the four Gospel accounts, they all look at Jesus from a different perspective.

Because you could say that Matthew gives to us the Gospel of the King, in which Jesus is the royal descendant of King David, who will sit upon the throne of King David.

Luke gives to us the Gospel of the perfect Son of Man, in which Jesus, he is the sinless Saviour, who came to seek and to save the lost. Mark gives to us the Gospel of the suffering servant, the servant who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

But then you have John. And John, he doesn't begin with the birth of Jesus. He begins in eternity. He begins outside of time. And he gives to us the Gospel of the eternal Son of God, who became flesh in time and dwelt among us.

And so as we come to the end of Matthew's Gospel, Matthew has written for us the Gospel of the King. He has heralded before us throughout his Gospel. He's lifted up to us this royal descendant of King David, who has come to sit upon the throne of David.

[6 : 40] And that's how Matthew began his Gospel. He opened with this genealogy. Genealogy. His first verse says, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

But you know, what becomes apparent as you read through Matthew's Gospel, the Gospel of the King, is that the Jews turned a blind eye towards this King. In fact, we're told in verses 11 to 15, that when the chief priests in the local synagogue heard that this Jesus, whom they had crucified, when they heard that he had miraculously been resurrected from the dead, they paid the Roman soldiers to keep quiet and say that the resurrection didn't happen at all, and that it was just the disciples who came one night and stole the body of Jesus.

And you know, after all that the Jews saw and heard of Jesus, all the miracles, all the teaching, all the signs, all the healings, after all that they saw and heard from Jesus, and yet they turned a blind eye towards him.

And the Jews, they turned a blind eye towards Jesus because he wasn't the king they wanted. Because as a descendant of King David, the Jews thought that this Messiah figure, he was going to be a conquering king.

They expected Jesus to be this warrior king, like King David. And they thought that the Messiah was going to be this saviour who would come and overthrow the powers of the Roman Empire and take control of the nation of Israel again.

[8 : 18] They thought that Jesus was going to be this earthly king with an earthly kingdom and have a political rule. But instead, they received a prince of peace.

A prince of peace who came to bring peace and reconciliation between God and mankind. And so the Jews, they turned a blind eye to Jesus because he wasn't the king they wanted.

And you know, there are many people who still do that today. There are many people, I'm sure, even in here this morning, who recognise who Jesus is as king and as saviour, but they just turn a blind eye to him.

And yet, can it be said that you turn a blind eye because like the Jews, he's not the king you want. He's not the king you want. You want a king that lets you live as you please and do as you want.

You want a king that will not make demands upon your life and tell you what to do and how to live. You want a king that doesn't command you to bow down before him.

[9 : 31] In fact, maybe the truth is that you want to be king and queen over your own life. And you will not let this man rule over you.

But you know, there isn't enough room for two monarchs to sit on the throne of your own heart. And if Jesus is to be king over your life, then you have to dethrone yourself.

You have to abdicate the throne of your own heart and you have to bow your knee in humble submission to King Jesus. King Jesus must sit upon the throne of your heart.

And that's why baptism is a call to rejoice. It's a call to worship. It's a call to give worth-ship to Jesus Christ as king.

We're to give him the worth that he deserves. We're to praise Jesus for who he is. We're to acknowledge that Jesus is the king of kings. We're to submit to his authority set down in his word.

[10 : 33] And we're to bow down before him and confess that he and he alone is Lord. And that's what baptism is. It's an outward sign of submission.

It's the sacrament of making an oath before the king of kings. And there's one thing for sure about baptism. Baptism does not have any magical power.

It doesn't have any ability to make us a Christian. Our baptism doesn't save us. The water doesn't cleanse us from our sins. It doesn't make us safe.

And it doesn't even guarantee that we will get to heaven. Because baptism is an outward sign of submission before King Jesus. It's a call to rejoice that Jesus Christ is the king of kings.

Because in baptism we're acknowledging, we're vowing before a holy God. That the Bible is the supreme authority in our life. And that Jesus Christ is the only saviour of sinners.

[11 : 39] Baptism is a call to rejoice. And Matthew tells us here that even though the Jews turned a blind eye to Jesus, when the disciples saw and came and saw Jesus, it says they worshipped him.

The Jews turned away from him. But the disciples came and worshipped him. That's what we're told in verse 17. When they came to the mountain to which Jesus had erected them, when they saw him, they worshipped him.

But some doubted. And what's interesting is that Jesus had erected his disciples to this place of worship. Because Jesus told his disciples, he told them that he would meet with them on a mountain in Galilee.

We're not told which mountain it was, but that's not what's significant. What's significant is that the disciples were in the city of Jerusalem. And they had to travel nearly 80 miles to meet Jesus on a mountain somewhere in Galilee.

The disciples had to travel nearly 80 miles to see Jesus at the place which he had appointed. It was a great distance to travel.

[12 : 49] And you know, the Puritan Matthew Henry, he makes the point that it seemed needless to go to Galilee. Especially when the disciples were going to have to come back again to Jerusalem and witness the ascension of Jesus.

But he says the disciples, they had learned to obey Christ's commands and not to object against them. And then Matthew Henry, he applies this to us by saying, Those who wish to maintain communion with Christ must attend to him where he has appointed.

Which means that we are to make every effort to be in the places of worship which Jesus Christ has called us to. We're to make every effort to be in the Lord's house, both ends on the Lord's day.

We're to make every effort to bring our children if we can manage. I know it's difficult. But if we can manage, because this is where Jesus has appointed to meet with us and speak to us.

We're to make every effort to be in the prayer meeting during the week. Because that's where Jesus has appointed to meet with us. We're to make every effort to come aside from our busy day and take time to pray and read the Bible.

[14 : 07] Because that's where Jesus has appointed to meet with us. As Matthew Henry says, Those who wish to maintain communion and fellowship with Christ, they must attend to him where he has appointed.

My friend, we're to seek an audience with King Jesus. Because he's called us to submit our lives to us. He's called us to worship him. And he's called us to rejoice in him.

But you know, I love Matthew's little pastoral note that he gives at the end of verse 17. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted.

The disciples came to Jesus. They travelled miles and they came to Jesus. They saw Jesus. They bowed down before Jesus. They worshipped Jesus. And yet they still had doubts.

They still had doubts. And you know, they are some of the most comforting words in the Bible. Because they remind us that the Christian life isn't always plain sailing.

[15 : 11] We aren't always full of the joys of the Lord. We don't always have it all together. We're not always strong in our faith. Because like the disciples, even though we've seen Jesus by faith.

And we've bowed down before Jesus. And even though we worship Jesus, sometimes we lack assurance. Sometimes we doubt our fitness as Christians. Because all we can see is our failures and our unworthiness.

But what we must always remind ourselves. Is that our salvation and our assurance. It's not in self.

But in Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ alone. It's not about looking inward. It's all about looking upward. Looking upward. And I don't know what the hymn writer said when she looked upward.

She said, Blessed assurance. Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation. Purchase of God. Born of his spirit.

[16 : 13] Washed in his blood. Washed in his blood. That's the testimony of the Christian. And so we're asking this morning, what is baptism?

And Matthew is reminding us that baptism, it's a call to rejoice. It's a call to worship Jesus as the King of Kings. And acknowledge him as Lord. But baptism, it's also a call or a command.

A command to repent. A command to repent. That's what we see secondly. It's a command to repent. It says, if we read again at verse 16.

He says, Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

When the disciples met with Jesus at the appointed place and time, he assured them that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him by his father.

[17 : 17] And what Jesus is saying is that he has been exalted. He has been exalted to his rightful office as the King of Kings. And this statement that Jesus makes, it highlights to us the climax and culmination of Matthew's Gospel.

Because as we said, Matthew's Gospel, it's the Gospel of the King. Matthew reveals Jesus to us as the royal descendant of King David, who has come to sit upon the throne of David.

And as we said, that's how Matthew began his Gospel. It began with this genealogy of Jesus as the son of David. But when Matthew reveals Jesus to us on the pages of Scripture, he doesn't present us to him as this exalted Lord.

We don't see him as the exalted and reigning King. No, Matthew presents Jesus to us as this eternal King who has humbled himself by taking upon himself the form of humanity.

Because in the opening narrative, as we know it so well from the Christmas story, we know in the opening narrative of Matthew's Gospel about the birth of Jesus Christ, who is the King.

[18 : 38] And as we know, it's not a royal coronation that we see, but it's an act of humiliation as Jesus is born in a stable in Bethlehem. And you know, as you read through the narrative of Matthew's Gospel, as you progress through the years of Jesus' life, all we can say about Jesus is that he went down, down, down.

His entire life was an act of humiliation, where he was tempted by the devil, he was rejected by his people, he was chased out of the cities and out of synagogues, he was opposed by the religious elite and made an outcast by his own family.

It was down, down, down. It was an act of humiliation. And as we read through Matthew's Gospel, Matthew keeps reminding us, this is the King.

This is King Jesus. When Matthew records the first words of Jesus, Jesus says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

When Jesus gives his first sermon on the mount, he teaches about what it means to live in the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus tells his parables, he reveals what the kingdom of heaven is like.

[19 : 57] Every parable begins with a statement, the kingdom of heaven is like. But this humiliation of the descendant of King David, it goes all the way down to the cross.

Because there's this plot to kill Jesus. Judas is known as the villain, the chief priests are the instigators of it all, and the Romans are the executioners. And all the time, it's down, down, down, all the way.

It's an act of humiliation from the crown to the cradle to the cross. All the way down. And don't you just love what the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2?

He says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

There was humiliation. The King of Kings experienced humiliation on our behalf. Because, as Isaiah says, he was wounded for our transgressions.

[21 : 18] He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement, which brought us peace, it was laid upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed.

All the way down to death. My friend, King Jesus experienced the horrors of humiliation on our behalf. But, as we all know, that's not the end of the story.

Because, Paul says about King Jesus, God the Father highly exalted him. He highly exalted him. He raised him from the dead. He opened the tomb.

Jesus gloriously ascended up on high, so that he could lead the captives free. The Father exalted his beloved Son, and he restored to the King what was rightfully his, all authority in heaven and on earth.

And, Paul reminds us that when Jesus was exalted, when he was given all authority in heaven and on earth, he was also given a name that is above every other name.

[22 : 31] And that it will be at the name of Jesus that every knee will bow. It will be at the name of King Jesus that every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and in hell.

And they will all confess, we will all confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

My friend, what Matthew is reminding us here as he brings us to the climax and culmination of his gospel is that King Jesus, he has been enthroned on high and he has put all his enemies under his feet and it's in him that we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

He is the king and head of his church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead and that in all things he might have the preeminence.

He might have the glory. My friend, it's because all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to King Jesus that he commands all people everywhere to repent.

[23 : 41] to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel. And we might think, well, what does repentance have to do with baptism?

But the truth is it has everything to do with baptism. Not only because the water in the act of baptism it signifies the washing and cleansing of sin, but also because in the New Testament church, repentance and baptism they always went hand in hand.

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and over 3,000 souls were saved, he exhorted to everyone who was present in the congregation, he said, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

And we're told that by the end of his sermon when Peter tells the congregation that the promise of baptism is to us and to all our children, he says that they received the word and were baptized and they were added to the visible church.

They received the sign of cleansing and they received the seal from the king and they were brought in to the visible church of Jesus Christ. And as we said, repentance and baptism, they go hand in hand.

[25 : 01] You read through the book of Acts and it's the case with every single one of them. Simon the sorcerer, the Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia, the Philippian jailer and all his family, the church in Corinth and even the apostle Paul, they all acknowledge that Jesus Christ is king and that he has all authority in heaven and on earth and in doing so they repented of their sins and they were baptized.

And so because Jesus has all authority, baptism reminds us that there is a command to repent. There is a command to repent.

And that's what we need to teach our children when we're taking the oath in baptism. We have to teach our children that Jesus is king and that he has all authority in heaven and on earth and that by our example we are to teach our children to repent of their sins.

we can't repent for them. We can't do it for them but we have to teach them how to repent and the importance of repenting.

We have to teach them. And you know I'm sure that most of us if not all of us in here have been baptized. You were baptized as a child but as you know it didn't save you.

[26 : 26] It didn't guarantee you anything in the way of salvation because as this is teaching as Matthew is teaching us here we have to come to Jesus on bended knee and we have to repent of our sins because the water of baptism it's a sign of cleansing.

It's not the water that cleanses us from all our sin it's it's the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all our sin and that's the promise to us and to our children the promise that if we confess our sins God is faithful and God is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness only because the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin.

It's only the blood that cleanses us and therefore because Jesus is king baptism is a call to rejoice and it's a command to repent but lastly we see that baptism is a commission to reach out it's a commission to reach out Jesus says in verse 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 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age and so as Matthew brings his gospel to its conclusion he's affirmed to us that King Jesus has established a spiritual kingdom upon this earth and that he is king Jesus is king in the kingdom of heaven and he has all authority in heaven and on earth but in these closing words the king issues to us a commission a commission to those who are part of the kingdom of heaven

Jesus issues a commission to his disciples to go and make more disciples and it's interesting that if you translate it literally this verse it says as you go make disciples of all nations meaning that it's not just a command to go but the response of being a disciple of Jesus being part of the kingdom of heaven is to spread the good news the responsibility of the disciple is to spread the good news of Jesus and so it's not if you go or when you go it's as you go as you go and make disciples of all nations implying that everyone in the kingdom of heaven young middle aged and elderly we are all to be actively involved in reaching out to all the nations as a disciple of Jesus there's no provision of opting out you've been brought in therefore you have to bring others in with you we've been commissioned to reach out in order to bring in but our commission is not just to have people in the pews our commission is not to have crowds in church our commission is to make disciples it's to make learners learners disciples who will deny self take up their cross and follow

Jesus we're to make disciples we're to teach and encourage and challenge and train those who come into the kingdom of heaven and we're to teach encourage challenge and train them so that they will go out and bring others in but that's not just my responsibility it's the responsibility of every disciple we are to disciple one another we are to disciple the disciples because our commission it's not to look in it's to reach out our commission is to reach out and our reaching out it's not as Jesus says it's not to a particular people it's not of those of a certain age or class or social status or nationality or gender or language the remit for our commission to reach out is all nations all nations were to make seek to make disciples of whosoever whosoever will says Jesus let them come and you know

[31 : 04] I love what J.C. Ryle says I always love what he says but what he says about this in this passage in his commentary J.C. Ryle says the duty which Jesus lays on his disciples is that he bids them to go and teach all nations they were not to confine their knowledge to themselves but to communicate it to others they were not to suppose that salvation was revealed only to the Jews but to make it known to all people they were to strive to make disciples of all nations and tell the whole earth that Christ had died for sinners then Ryle he applies this teaching by saying he says let us never forget that this solemn injunction is still in force it is still the bounded duty of every disciple of Christ to do all that he or she can in person and by prayer to make others acquainted with Jesus where is our faith asks Ryle if we neglect our duty it may well be questioned he says whether we know the value of the gospel if we do not desire to make it known to all the world and you know

J.C. Riley makes a valuable point that if we know the preciousness of the gospel in our own heart and we know its eternal value then we should make seek to make it known to everyone in our community and beyond because the commission of King Jesus is to reach out to the homes and families of our community and beyond and as we go to our homes and our families and our communities and our nations we are to baptise them it says we are to call them to rejoice that Jesus is king we are to command them to repent of their sins because our commission is not just to make disciples but we are also to baptise them in the name not the names but the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit there are three persons in the godhead and they are not only equal in power and glory but they also have one name and when we are baptised we are baptised into the name we are brought into the visible church which belongs to the father and to the son and to the holy spirit and when we are brought in we are taught by our parents and our congregation to observe all the things that

Jesus has commanded us in his word we are taught to deny self we are taught to take up our cross and we are taught to follow after Jesus we are taught to be disciples of Jesus Christ and so we're asking this morning what is baptism and we've discovered that baptism is a call to rejoice that Jesus is king it's a command to repent before the king of kings and it's a commission to reach out so that more and more will know this king for themselves but the last word I want to leave us with are just the last words of Jesus because Jesus says to those who have heard the call to rejoice and they have obeyed the command to repent and they have received the commission to reach out Jesus says to his judge I am with you always I am with you always

Jesus assures us of his presence now and all the days of our life because that's the promise that's the promise of the good shepherd that when we confess about king Jesus when we say the lord is my shepherd we receive the promise as we will sing in a moment in psalm 23 we receive the promise that goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in god's house forever more my dwelling place shall be when we confess Jesus to be king and our shepherd we receive the promise I am with you always I am with you always and that's what we hope for and that's what we pray for for Alexa Mary who's to be baptized that's what we hope and pray for for all those who have been baptized in the congregation and all those who will be baptized in the congregation that's what we hope and pray for for everyone who is under the sound of the gospel that they will confess

Jesus to be king they will confess Jesus to be their shepherd that they will know the promise of his presence with them all the days of their life so what is baptism it's a call to rejoice a command to repent and a commission to reach out Jesus says to us 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 observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age may the lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh lord our gracious god we give thanks to thee for all the great provisions that thou hast given to thy church and lord we pray that we would see that even the provision of baptism that it calls us to rejoice in a wonderful saviour a king who has done in us and for us far above and beyond our asking or our thinking that we would see that baptism is the command to repent to repent and to believe in this gospel the good news that jesus christ died for sinners and that lord we would see that baptism is this commission to reach out that there are those still in darkness those lord who are still lost that we would compel them to come in that the master's house may be filled lord bless us we pray undertake for us go with us as we continue in thy presence and do us good for jesus sake amen we can now sing the words of psalm 23 psalm 23 that's in the scottish psalter page 229 psalm 23 psalm 23 psalm psalm psalm psalm the lord's my shepherd i'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by down to the end of the psalm goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in god's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be and after we sing this psalm if i ask if you could remain standing for the baptism so psalm 23 the psalm to god's praise