

THE CLIMAX OF THE GOSPEL

Go and Make Disciples!

Matthew 28:18–20 | The Great Commission

The only command that remains until He returns.

THE PASSAGE — Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV)

Matthew 28:18–20, *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

We have preached through the entire Gospel of Matthew. We began at chapter 1:1 — a genealogy that announced a King. You traced His birth, His baptism, His temptation, His beatitudes, His parables, His miracles, His confrontations with the Pharisees, His transfiguration, His entry into Jerusalem, His last supper, His agony in Gethsemane, His arrest, His trial, His crucifixion, His burial, and His resurrection. 266 sermons. One glorious arc. And it all — every word of it — was heading here.

This is not the end of the series. This is its purpose. Everything Matthew wrote was building toward the moment when the risen Lord would open His mouth and speak the final word. Hear this sermon as a man standing at the top of a mountain, looking back over the entire journey — and forward over a world still waiting to hear.

Introduction — The Journey that brought us here

The Last Order

*When a general dies in battle, his last order to his troops becomes sacred. **At the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, as the HMS Victory sailed into the combined fleets of France and Spain, Admiral Horatio Nelson sent a signal that was hoisted flag by flag across the rigging: 'England expects that every man will do his duty.'***

Nelson was killed that day. But every British sailor that day knew — and every British schoolchild has known since — what was expected of them. The last order of a great commander defines everything that comes after it.

We have come today to the last order of the greatest Commander who ever lived. Not in defeat but in total victory. Not at the moment of His death but from the other side of His resurrection. And His final order is not for England's sailors for a single afternoon. It is for His church — for every generation — until He comes again.

We have arrived at the last three verses of the Gospel of Matthew. But to understand their weight their full, crushing, glorious, life-changing weight, we must stand here and look back over the entire journey that brought us to this mountain in Galilee.

266 sermons. One gospel. One King. One story. And it all converges right here.

Before we begin — This is only an Echo

When we come to **Matthew 28:19** and hear Jesus say, '**Make disciples of all nations,**' we must understand at the outset: **this is not something new.**

It has never been something new. This command is only an echo the fullest, loudest, final echo of God's oldest intention for the human race.

God in the very beginning intended to bring all mankind into fellowship with Himself. It was not until man, in sin, went away from God that He even designed separate nations. It was not until He needed a witness people, a missionary nation, that He called out Israel.

Israel's very reason for existence was to reach the world.

- They were not chosen for privilege.
- They were chosen for mission.

1 Chronicles 16:24, *"Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples."*

- ✓ God said through the prophets — in **Isaiah 42, 43, 52, and 66**: *go to the world.*
- ✓ He said in **1 Timothy 2:3–4** that *He 'will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.'*
- ✓ He said in **John 3:16** that *He so loved the world — not Israel alone, not one favoured nation, but the world.*

The heart of God has always been a heart to reach the lost.

Israel refused. The nation that was called to be a light to the Gentiles chose instead to guard their privileges.

Matthew 22 tells the story with devastating precision: a **king prepared a wedding feast** for his son and went to call the guests who had already been invited Israel, who knew their Messiah was coming.

They refused.

Some were indifferent.

Some were hostile.

So, the king said: go to the highways and byways and invite anyone you can find. That is us. **We are the anyone.** Now we have been sent to find the anyone else.

This command is an echo of Abraham — all families of the earth blessed through his seed.

An echo of Israel's calling declares His glory among the nations.

An echo of every prophet who ever wept over the lostness of the world.

It reaches its fullest volume here, on this mountain, from the lips of the risen Son of God.

The Five Essentials — How to fulfil the Great Commission?

This passage gives us five essential elements for fulfilling the Great Commission.

They are not techniques or strategies.

They are attitudes and realities that form the complete framework of a disciple-making life.

The five essentials of Matthew 28:16–20:

- ▶ **1. AVAILABILITY (V 16)** — *The eleven went to the mountain Jesus appointed.* They were where they were supposed to be,

when they were supposed to be there. Availability comes before clarity. You do not need to know where you are going. You need to be available to the One who does.

▶ **2. WORSHIP (V 17) — *When they saw the risen Christ, they worshipped.*** Some doubted — but He came near, and doubt gave way to worship. A worshipping heart is wholly set on Christ. All else fades. All else is put in right order. You cannot fulfil the Great Commission without a single focus on Jesus.

▶ **3. SUBMISSION (V 18) — *All authority is given to Me.*** Before the command, the credential. Before the going, the bowing. Submission to the sovereign Lord is the only posture from which the commission can be obeyed. This is not a question of feeling. It is a question of the will.

▶ **4. OBEDIENCE (V 19) *Therefore, since I have all authority, go and make disciples.*** The commission is not negotiable. It is not optional for those who have called Him Lord. Obedience flows from availability, worship, and submission. It is the fruit of a God-centred heart.

▶ **5. POWER (V 20) *I am with you always.*** The task is impossible in human strength. Every faithful disciple-maker leans on this constantly: Lord, You love these people more than I do reach them through me. It is the power of His presence that makes everything possible.

The Gospel of Matthew — One Story, One Direction

Matthew 1:1–17

The Genealogy — Son of David, Son of Abraham

Matthew opened with 42 generations of names not to bore us but to announce a King. *'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.'* This was a royal declaration. God had promised Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (**Genesis 12:3**). He had promised David an eternal throne.

The genealogy of Matthew is about the One who has the right to speak. The One, who is about to command, has the authority to command. The promise He was born to fulfil was always global!

Matthew 1:18–25

The Virgin Birth — Immanuel, God with Us.

The infant in the manger was not merely a remarkable child. He was the fulfilment of **Isaiah 7:14** the virgin-born Son whose name means God with us. Matthew begins with Immanuel. He will end with **'I am with you always.'**

The arch of the entire gospel is held up by the same two pillars: **the presence of God with His people.**

The baby born of a virgin is the same risen Lord who promises never to leave. What began in a stable is consummated on a mountain.

Matthew 2:1–12

The Magi — The First Gentiles Bow

Before He had preached a single sermon, before He had performed a single miracle, the first people to worship Jesus were Gentiles from the east, professional kingmakers who travelled hundreds of miles to bow at His feet and present Him with royal gifts. Matthew is telling us something at the very beginning: **this King is not just for Israel only.** The Magi were the first fruits of what **Matthew 28:19** would command **'all the nations.'** The commission to reach all

nations was embedded in the Gospel from its second chapter.

Matthew 3–4

Baptism, Temptation, and the Dawn of the Kingdom

The King was coronated at the Jordan, the Spirit descending, the Father speaking: ***'This is My beloved Son.'***

Then immediately tested in the wilderness and He triumphed over every strategy of Satan, wielding only the written Word of God. Three times: ***'It is written.'***

The One who would command His disciples to teach ***'all things I have commanded you'*** (28:20) showed them how to live by the Word, under the Spirit, in obedience to the Father.

Matthew 5–7

The Sermon on the Mount — The Constitution of the Kingdom

For three chapters the King sat on a hillside above the Sea of Galilee and described what life in His kingdom looked like.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

You are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world.

Do not murder in your heart.

Do not lust in your mind.

Love your enemies.

Be perfect as your Father is perfect.

This was not a moral upgrade. This was the internal character of people transformed by grace, the character of the very disciples He would one day send to all nations.

Matthew 8–25

Ministry, Miracles, Parables, and Opposition

He healed the sick and raised the dead.
He stilled the storm and walked on water.
He fed five thousand with a boy's lunch.
He cast out demons, opened blind eyes, and loosed deaf ears.
He told stories about seeds and soils, about hidden treasure and a costly pearl, about ten virgins and a man with talents.
He confronted the Pharisees, wept over Jerusalem, and warned of coming judgment.

Every miracle was a credential.
Every parable was a portrait of the kingdom.
Every confrontation was a demonstration that the world's religious systems were bankrupt and that only He could give the righteousness that exceeds the scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 26–27

Gethsemane, The Cross, and The Sealed Tomb

He was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver the price of a slave.
He was arrested, abandoned, denied, flogged, mocked, and crucified.
He bore our sins in His body on the tree.
He cried **'It is finished'** and gave up His spirit.
He was buried in a rich man's tomb just as Isaiah 53:9 had said.
The stone was sealed.
A Roman guard was posted.
Every enemy of God was certain it was over. God was not finished.
He had barely begun.

Matthew 28:1–17

The Empty Tomb, The Risen Lord, The Doubting Disciples

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb. The stone was rolled away by an angel. The

guards had fallen like dead men. **'He is not here He is risen, as He said.'**

They ran with fear and great joy. Jesus met them.

They worshipped Him.

The disciples gathered in Galilee.

Some worshipped.

Some doubted.

Into that mixture of worship and doubt, the risen King spoke His final recorded words in this Gospel.

266 sermons. One trajectory. Everything in the Gospel of Matthew was heading toward this moment this mountain these three verses.

The Son of Abraham, born to bless all families of the earth.

The Son of David, born to reign over all nations.

Now risen from the dead, standing before eleven ordinary men, and giving them the most extraordinary command ever issued to human beings.

1. The Authority of the Commission (v.18)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me

Matthew 28:18, *"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'"*

Before a single command is given, the risen King makes a declaration. Everything that follows rests entirely on this foundation.

He does not say 'some authority' or 'spiritual authority' or 'authority over willing hearts.'

He says *ALL authority — in HEAVEN and on EARTH.*

This is not merely a title or a theological claim. We know the range of this authority from watching it at work throughout the Gospel.

- ✓ He displayed authority over disease (**Matthew 4:23**),
- ✓ authority over demons (**Matthew 8:32; 12:22**),
- ✓ authority over death, raising Lazarus (**John 11**),
- ✓ authority over sin, forgiving it on the spot (**Matthew 9:6**),
- ✓ authority over nature, stilling the storm, walking on water, multiplying bread.
- ✓ He spoke as one having authority that superseded every religious teacher in Israel (**Matthew 7:29**).
- ✓ He had authority to delegate this same power to His twelve apostles (**Matthew 10:1**) and to the seventy (**Luke 10**).
- ✓ He had authority to judge all men (**John 5**).
- ✓ And in **John 10:18** He said: *'I have authority to lay down My life and take it up again.'*

This is a man like no other who has ever lived.

Notice what Jesus does not say here.

- He does not say: 'Most authority.'
- He does not say: 'Authority in spiritual matters.'
- He does not say: 'Authority over willing hearts.'

He says ALL authority in HEAVEN and on EARTH.

There is no realm excluded.

Satan once offered Him the kingdoms of this world on a mountain of temptation. Jesus refused.

He had no need to receive them from Satan.

- ✓ **He would receive them from His Father — and possess authority over every one of them.**

Daniel 7:13–14, *"Behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven... To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away."*

Daniel saw it centuries before it happened. The risen Son going before the Ancient of Days, the Father, and receiving all dominion, all authority, all kingdoms.

This is the One who now speaks: **'All authority is given to Me.'**

- ✓ The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (**John 5**).
- ✓ God has made Him to be Lord and Christ the Messiah-King (**Acts 2:36**).
- ✓ God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name above every name (**Philippians 2:9–11**).

A. This Authority Was Not Always Visible

- It was **not** visible when He was a carpenter's son in a Nazareth workshop for thirty years.
- It was **not** visible when soldiers gambled for His clothing at the foot of the cross.

- It was **not** visible when the Pharisees congratulated themselves that the problem had been permanently solved.

But the resurrection changed everything.

When God raised Jesus from the dead, He was declaring publicly and irreversibly: My Son's claims were true. His death was not defeat it was the greatest victory in history.

His authority is total.

His reign has begun.

Romans 1:4, *"...declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."*

Philippians 2:9–11, *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."*

B. Why Authority comes before Command?

Jesus deliberately places the declaration of authority before the command to go. This is not incidental. It is the entire foundation of the mission.

If His authority were partial, if there were any nation, any culture, any person beyond the scope of His kingship then the commission would be a gamble. We would be going into territory that might not be His.

We would be making disciples for a king whose claim to sovereignty might be contested.

But the authority is total.

- There is no people group on earth that does not belong to Him.
- There is no language that His gospel cannot enter.
- There is no culture whose people are beyond the reach of His grace.
- There is no power in hell that can stop His church.

We are not going into enemy territory as guerrilla fighters hoping for the best. We are going as ambassadors of an established throne, representing a King who already holds all authority. The nations belong to Him. We are going to call them home.

2. The Assignment of the Commission (V 19–20a)

Go — Make Disciples — Baptise — Teach

Matthew 28:19–20a, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."*

A. One Command — Not Four

The Greek grammar is precise, and it changes everything.

There is ONE main verb in this sentence. **One imperative. One command.**

It is ***Matheteusate*** — make disciples.

Matheteusate — *make disciples* — *THE single imperative; the entire commission in one word.*

Poreuthentes — *having gone* — *a participle of assumption, not a separate command*

Baptizontes — *baptising* — *a participle supporting the command*

Didaskontes — *teaching* — *a participle supporting the command*

Notice that first participle carefully.

In the **Greek**, it is ***Poreuthentes*** having gone. It is not an imperative. It is an assumption.

If you are going to make disciples of all nations, you will have gone somewhere. **Going is assumed.** It is the corollary, the natural context of the one command.

This means the commission does not require a passport before it begins. It does not wait for a clear call to a specific country or a signed missionary support form.

Having gone wherever you are, wherever you have been placed, you are already in commission territory.

- Your workplace.
- Your neighbourhood.
- Your school.
- Your family dinner table.

The commission follows you. It travels with you.

*Wherever you go, the command goes with you: **make disciples.***

Think of how far this commission has travelled since **Matthew 4**. When Jesus first called His disciples at the Sea of Galilee, He said: *'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'* (**Matthew 4:18–20**).

From the call of Matthew 4 to the commission of Matthew 28, the entire Gospel has been a training programme.

They were taught, tested, sent out, brought back, stretched, broken, and reformed so that when they were finally commissioned to be fishers of men, they would know exactly what that involved.

*The church was not called to make converts.
She was called to make disciples.
A convert receives a decision.
A disciple receives a life.
Conversion is the door.
Discipleship is the house.*

B. All the Nations

***Panta ta ethne** — all the nations — every ethnic group, tribe, tongue, and people without exception*

Matthew began his Gospel with a genealogy identifying **Jesus as the Son of Abraham** the heir of the covenant that promised blessing to **ALL the families of the earth** (**Genesis 12:3**).

He then showed the first worshippers of Jesus were Gentiles, the Magi from the east. He recorded Jesus healing the servant of a Roman centurion, the daughter of a Canaanite woman, and ministry in **'Galilee of the Gentiles.'**

The commission does not surprise us. Matthew has been building to it since chapter 1. **The Son of Abraham is now, through His church, beginning to fulfil the promise** that was made to **Abraham 2,000 years before the cross.**

Revelation 7:9, *"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."*

That vision is not yet complete.

- There are still thousands of people groups who have never heard the name of Jesus.
- There are still languages into which the Scripture has never been translated.
- There are still villages where no church has ever been planted.

Revelation 7:9 is the finished product of **Matthew 28:19**. And we are working toward it right now.

C. The Two marks of a Disciple

Before we look at the two marks, we must settle a definition that is critical for WCF's entire ministry and deeply debated in the church today.

Mathēteuō — *to make a disciple — a believing learner; a learning believer; one who places faith and follows in a life of learning*

Mathētēs alēthōs — *the genuine disciple — John 8:31: the one who continues in My Word*

The word **Mathēteuō** carries the idea of a believing learner or a learning believer.

- It is not simply one who believes.
- It is not simply one who learns.

It is both simultaneously.

A person who places faith in Christ and follows in a life of learning. That is the disciple.

There is a teaching spreading in many churches today that says Christians and disciples are two different categories.

- You can be a Christian without being a disciple.
- You become a Christian first easily, by faith alone and later, if you are willing to commit more fully, you become a disciple.

This is deeply wrong.

It is pastorally dangerous.

Matthew 28:19 demolishes it.

The command is: **make disciples**. **Not: make converts** who may one day become disciples. The moment of salvation is the moment of discipleship.

When a person comes to Christ, they come as a beggar, poor in spirit, mourning over sin, meek, hungry for righteousness. That is the Beatitudes. That is the character of every genuinely converted person.

A person with that character is already a disciple, a submissive, learning, obedient follower of Jesus Christ.

The only reason people want to separate Christianity from discipleship is that they know the Bible demands total surrender from a disciple.

So, they **create a comfortable category of Christians who are saved but not surrendered.**

Jesus never created that category.

The **Rich Young Ruler** reveals precisely this: ***he wanted eternal life without submission to Christ's lordship.*** *Jesus let him walk away rather than create that category for him.*

Discipleship begins at conversion not later!

▶ **John 8:31**, *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*

The genuine disciple is the one who continues in My Word. Not a second-level Christian. The genuine one.

▶ **Hebrews 5:9**, *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,*

Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all of them that obey Him. Obedience is not evidence of a higher tier. It is the evidence of genuine salvation.

Romans 6:13, *And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Paul thanks God that the Roman believers now yield themselves as servants of righteousness. They are obedient to the faith. That is discipleship.

- ▶ The truly converted person has a hunger for God's Word, a desire to be obedient, and a submissive spirit even when they fail, even when they are inconsistent.
That desire is the mark of the disciple.

1. Baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is the public, decisive break with the old life and the public, decisive entry into the community of Christ. The phrase 'in the name' is singular not 'names.' Three persons, One God.

The disciple is baptised into relationship with the Trinity, the sovereign Father, the redeeming Son, the indwelling Spirit.

Baptism is not salvation.

But it is the moment a new disciple stands before witnesses and says: *I belong to Jesus Christ. My old life is over. My new life has begun.*

No one has ever seen a salvation. It is a supernatural and spiritual transaction invisible to human eyes.

All we ever see is the fruit of one.

All we ever see is the result.

If we do not see the result, we have reason to question whether there was a genuine salvation.

Baptism is that initial, identifiable result and the fruit of obedience that declares something has happened in this person's soul.

In the early church, baptism was not a comfortable formality.

For a Jew in Jerusalem, to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ was to be cut off from family, expelled from the synagogue, and identified as a traitor. *It was an act of enormous courage and public confession. The price was very high.*

That is precisely why it separated the genuine disciples from the crowd who found Jesus interesting. Baptism said: ***I am all in. Whatever the cost. He is my Lord.***

Notice the grammar of the Trinity in this phrase. Jesus does not say 'in the names of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' He says 'in the name' singular.

One name. Three persons.

The mystery of the Trinity contained in a single word. 'Name' means all that a person is ***their character, their authority, their identity***. To be baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to be baptised into the fullness of all that God is as Trinity.

The book of **Acts** confirms it everywhere: **Acts 2:41, 8:38, 9:18, 10:48, 16:33, 18:8, 19:5, 22:16** baptisms.

Everywhere the gospel was preached, everywhere people believed, people were baptised.

They were obedient to the command of the risen King.

The pattern remains today: we are not offering cheap grace and easy beliefism.

We call people to Christ and calling them to Christ means calling them to obedience, which is demonstrated in that first act of public confession: baptism.

2. Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.

Not teaching them information about Jesus.

Teaching them to observe to keep, to guard, to do all things He commanded.

The goal is not a congregation of people who know more theology but live the same way.

The goal is people being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

This is why expository preaching matters.

This is why 266 sermons matter.

You cannot make disciples *without the whole counsel of God* — poured in, verse by verse, passage by passage, year after year.

2 Timothy 2:2, *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

Paul describes four generations of disciple-making in one verse:

Paul — Timothy — faithful men — others.

That is the mathematics of the kingdom.

Not addition. Multiplication.

One faithful disciple making one faithful disciple making one faithful disciple and in ten generations the world has been reached. This is how twelve ordinary Galileans turned the Roman Empire upside down.

D. 'All Things I Have Commanded You'

After 266 sermons, we know exactly what *'all things I have commanded you'* means. It means everything Jesus taught in the Gospel of Matthew.

A sample of what disciples are to be taught to observe:

- ▶ **The Beatitudes (5:3–12)** — blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungry for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted.
- ▶ **The Six Contrasts (5:21–48)** — righteousness that goes deeper than conduct, reaching into anger, lust, divorce, oath-keeping, retaliation, and enemy-love.
- ▶ **The Lord's Prayer (6:9–13)** — how to pray, fast, and give without being seen by men.
- ▶ **Seek first the kingdom (6:33)** — the antidote to anxiety, the reordering of all priorities.
- ▶ **The cost of discipleship (10:38)** — 'Take up your cross and follow Me.'
- ▶ **The Great Commandment (22:37–40)** — love God with everything, love your neighbour as yourself.
- ▶ **The Final Judgment (25:31–46)** — I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was a stranger, I was naked, I was sick, I was in prison.
- ▶ **And everything in between** — every parable, every miracle, every confrontation, every sermon.

Teaching 'all things I have commanded you' is not a curriculum to be completed. It is a life to be formed.

It takes years.

It takes relationships.

It takes a community.

It takes a preacher who will stand in the pulpit and preach the whole counsel of God week after week, year after year — until people look like Jesus.

3. The Assurance of the Commission (V 20b)

V 20, I am with you always, even to the end of the age

A. The arch of the entire Gospel

This promise is the answer to the name announced in **Matthew 1:23**.

Matthew 1:23, *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, 'God with us.'"*

- Matthew began his Gospel: **God with us**.
- Matthew ends his Gospel: **I am with you always**.

The Gospel of Matthew is held together by two pillars, and they are both the same pillar.

The child born in Bethlehem and the risen Lord on the mountain are the same Person. **Immanuel** has not left. He has never left. He will never leave.

This is the most remarkable structural fact in all of Matthew. The theologians call it an inclusion a deliberate bookend.

Matthew 1:23 and Matthew 28:20 are the same sentence, **28 chapters apart**.

Everything that happened between them, every healing, every parable, every confrontation, every miracle, the cross, the resurrection was God with us.

He promises us that ***it will never stop***.

*Matthew begins with God with us in a manger.
He ends with God with us on the mission field.
The Sermon on the Mount was God with us teaching.
The feeding of the five thousand was God with us
providing.
Gethsemane was God with us suffering.
The empty tomb was God with us conquering.
And now: I am with you always — God with us going.*

B. 'Always and the end of the Age'

Sunteleia

- **Teleia** means the endings.
- **Sun** means together.

- He does not say 'I will be with you on Sundays.'
- He does not say 'I will be with you when you succeed.'
- He does not say 'I will be with you when you feel My presence.'

He says ALL the days.

- The days **of failure**, when you preached and nobody responded. All the days.
 - The days **of grief**, when you buried someone, you loved and the questions had no answers. All the days.
 - The days **of persecution**, when the world mocked the gospel and the church was small and the cause seemed lost. All the days.
 - The days **of discouragement**, when after years of faithful service, you could see so little fruit. All the days.
- Every day that has ever been hard.
 - Every day you have ever considered stopping.
 - Every day you have wondered whether it was worth it.
 - On every single one of those days: I am with you.

'End of the age.' It is not telos which simply means something has stopped. It is **Sunteleia** the consummation.

The coming together of all the diverse ending events into a grand finale.

Jesus uses this same word in **Matthew 13** and in every case, it refers to His second coming.

What Jesus is saying is this: *'I am with you all the days until My second coming and when I come, I will be here in fullness. So until I get here, I will be here. Don't worry. Keep going.'*

Hebrews 13:5–6, *"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."⁶ So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

C. How is He Present? — The Holy Spirit

Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father (**Acts 1:9**).

How then is He with us?

The answer is **the Holy Spirit** the divine presence He promised before the cross.

John 14:16–18, *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*

Acts 1:8, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

The Great Commission and the promise of **Acts 1:8** are inseparable.

- ✓ The authority is Christ's.
- ✓ The presence is Christ's through the Spirit.

- ✓ The power is the Spirit's.
- ✓ The mission is His.

We are the instruments and the instrument that trusts its Master does not need to be afraid.

'To the end of the age.'

- The commission does not expire.
- The presence does not expire.

Until the last person from the last unreached people group is gathered into the kingdom until every tribe and tongue stands before the throne of the Lamb, Jesus is with His church in her mission.

What will you do with this Commission?

We have preached 266 sermons through the Gospel of Matthew.

We began at a genealogy.

We end at a command.

The question that now stands before every person in this room is not theological. It is not intellectual. It is personal.

*The risen King has spoken. The authority is absolute.
The assignment is clear.
The assurance is unconditional.
The only remaining question is this: What will YOU do?*

The Lifesaving Station

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occurred, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for their safety, went out day and night, tirelessly rescuing the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, and it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and others in the area, wanted to be associated with the station and give of their time and money. New boats were bought. The little station grew.

But some members were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They wanted something more comfortable as the first refuge for those saved from the sea.

So, they replaced the cots with better furniture.

The lifesaving station became a popular gathering place, beautifully decorated, furnished exquisitely. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired crews to do the work.

The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where initiations were held.

At about this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was considerably messed up.

So, the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club, where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, most members wanted to stop the lifesaving activity, because it was a hindrance and unpleasant to the normal social life of the club. Some insisted on lifesaving as their primary

purpose.

They were voted down and told: if you want to save the lives of people shipwrecked in these waters, begin your own lifesaving station down the coast — which they did. As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes as the old. It evolved into a club.

Another lifesaving station was founded.

History continued to repeat itself.

If you visit that coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent.

But most of the people drown. It is easy for the church to lose sight of what she is. So easy.

A. To those who do not yet know Jesus Christ!

If you have sat under the preaching of the Gospel of Matthew and you have not yet committed your life to Jesus Christ, today the commission reaches you.

You are part of 'all the nations.' You are one of the people He died to save. You are one of the souls the church exists to reach.

You have heard about His birth and His miracles and His death and His resurrection.

You have heard the Beatitudes blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard the standard your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

You have heard the verdict no one can meet that standard on their own.

You have heard the answer Christ died to give you the righteousness you cannot earn.

Romans 10:9, *"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

The commission has reached you. Do not walk away from it.

The same risen Christ who said *'Go and make disciples'* is standing before you today saying: *Come. Come to Me. All who are weary. All who have tried to build a life that works without Me. All who know that something is missing. All who have not yet said yes. **Come. Today.***

This may be the last sermon in this series.

It will not be your last moment of decision.

But every moment you delay, the heart grows a little harder. Today, while you hear His voice — do not harden your heart. Come.

B. To those who already know Jesus Christ!

If you know Jesus Christ, if you have repented of your sin, believed in His death and resurrection, and surrendered your life to Him then this commission is for YOU.

Personally.

Directly.

Urgently.

Five questions the Great Commission asks every believer:

▶ **Who are you currently discipling?**

If the answer is no one, who could you begin to walk alongside this week? The command is not 'attend church.' It is 'make disciples.'

▶ **Who in your life does not know Jesus?**

A family member, a colleague, a neighbour, a friend? The risen King has all authority over their lives too. He is sending you to them.

▶ **Are you giving, praying, and sending for the unreached peoples of the earth?**

Over 7,000 people groups still have no access to the gospel. Your prayers, your finances, and your willingness to go are part of the answer.

▶ **Are you being formed into the likeness of Christ?**

Discipleship is not just making disciples it is being one. Are you observing 'all things He has commanded'? Not selectively. All things.

▶ **Are you living in the conscious awareness of His presence?**

'I am with you always' is not a sentiment for difficult days. It is a fact for every day. Live like it is true. Because it is.

The eleven disciples who received this commission were not impressive people.

- **Peter** had denied Jesus three times.
- **Thomas** had doubted.
- **All of them** had fled when He was arrested.

Matthew 28:17 says that when they saw the risen Lord, some worshipped and some doubted.

Jesus did not wait for the doubters to resolve their uncertainty. He did not wait for the failures to earn back their credentials. He spoke to them in the middle of their mixture of worship and doubt, and He gave them the commission.

He does the same with you today. He is not waiting for you to be certain enough, or faithful enough, or gifted enough.

He is giving you the command in the middle of your ordinary, imperfect, sometimes doubting life. Go. I will be with you. All the days.

Application — From this Mountain, into the World

1. Start with one person.

The Great Commission does not begin with a strategy. It begins with a relationship. Think of just one person whose name comes to mind when you ask: **who do I know who does not know Jesus? That is your commission today.**

Not the whole world, but **One person**. Pray for them by name this week. Look for an opportunity to speak the gospel. Ask God to open the door. That is how empires of grace are built one person at a time.

2. Invest in someone's formation.

Identify one person who is younger in the faith than you. Not more gifted younger. Someone who needs what 266 sermons have put into you. Invite them to meet regularly. Open the Word together.

Answer their questions. Walk alongside them. **2 Timothy 2:2** commit what you have received to faithful people who will teach others. This is discipleship. This is the engine of the kingdom.

3. Give yourself to the global task.

If you cannot go, send.

Give to missionaries.

Support church planting among unreached peoples.

Pray specifically for people groups that have never heard the name of Jesus.

Learn the name of one unreached group and pray for them every day. Your prayer and your giving are part of the completion of **Revelation 7:9** the great multitude from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

4. Let this commission reorder your priorities.

After 266 sermons through Matthew, you know what lasts: **souls**.

You know what does not: everything else. Career, comfort, reputation, possessions all of it will be forgotten. Every person you led to Christ, every disciple you formed, every life you poured yourself into for the sake of the gospel that will last forever.

Live accordingly.

Invest accordingly.

Give accordingly.

5. Go with confidence — He is with you.

The greatest obstacle to obedience is fear.

- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of inadequacy.
- Fear of being thought foolish.

But the risen King says: All authority is Mine and I am sending you.

What is there to fear?

The One who raised Himself from the dead is walking with you into every conversation, every relationship, every act of witness, every moment of service. *'Lo, I am with you always'* is not a comfort for the difficult days. It is the foundation for every day.

Conclusion

No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets. — William Borden

William Borden was born in 1887 into one of America's wealthiest families. At sixteen, having toured the world, he came home consumed by one conviction: the unreached peoples of the earth must hear the gospel, and he would give his life to take it to them.

He turned down every business opportunity.

He wrote two words in the back of his Bible:

'No reserves.'

He enrolled at Princeton, preparing for the mission field — China, via Egypt.

After graduation he wrote two more words:

'No retreats.'

*On his way to China, he stopped in **Cairo, Egypt** to study Arabic. He contracted spinal meningitis. He was **dead at twenty-five**.*

Before he died, he wrote his final two words in his Bible:

'No regrets.'

Six words.

A whole life.

No reserves — he held nothing back.

No retreats — he never turned from the call.

No regrets — because he had obeyed the King with everything he had.

His life inspired a generation of missionaries. Thousands came to Christ.

William Borden never reached China. But through the lives he set ablaze, the gospel went further than he ever could have gone alone.

We have come to the end of 266 sermons through the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel that began with a genealogy announcing a King end with the King giving His final command to His church.

- ✓ He has not changed.
- ✓ The command has not changed.
- ✓ The authority behind it has not changed.

✓ The promise undergirding it has not changed.

The only thing that changes, the only variable in the Great Commission is us.

Whether we will go?

Whether we will make disciples?

Whether we will baptise and teach all that He has commanded?

Whether we will trust the One who said He will be with us always?

This is the only sermon that the church will ever need to preach to the world. Not the only sermon she will ever preach but the only one she ultimately serves.

Everything we do every word of exposition, every act of pastoral care, every baptism, every communion table, every prayer meeting, every mission offering exists to fulfil these three verses.

The Son of David. The Son of Abraham. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The risen King of all nations. He is standing before His church today as He stood before eleven ordinary people on a mountain in Galilee and He is saying the same thing He said to them:

*Go. Make disciples. I am with you always. Every single day.
Until the end.*

Revelation 5:9, *"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'"*

That day is coming. Every people group will be represented before the throne. Every language will sing the new song.

Every tribe will see the Lamb who was slain for them and on that day the Great Commission will be complete.

We are not there yet. The work is not finished.

The command is still in force.

266 sermons later, the question is the same question it has always been. The same question Jesus asked Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee:

Do you love Me? Then feed My sheep. Go and make disciples. All the nations. All authority. All the days. Until the end.

RESPONSE QUESTIONS — Not Discussion. Decision.

These questions are for a quiet moment alone before God.

1. You have heard the Gospel of Matthew preached from beginning to end. What has changed in you? Are you more like Jesus than when this series began? If not, what needs to happen?
2. If Jesus were to ask you today: 'Who are you making a disciple?' What would you answer?
3. 'All the nations'. Is there a people group on earth that is on your heart, in your prayers, in your giving?
4. 'I am with you always' all the days. Think of the hardest day you have faced in the last year. Did you live as though He was with you?

5. **William Borden wrote six words: No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.** If you were to describe your current commitment to the Great Commission in six words, what would they be?

World Christian Fellowship | www.wcflondon.com |