

## Going Beyond! -- Rev. Scott R. Larson

Text:

*Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV)*

An out-of-work fellow was going door-to-door in an upper-class neighborhood. At one door, a woman opened the door. "Excuse me ma'am," the fellow began, "I'm out-of-work and I'm looking for odd jobs to which I can earn money. I'm very handy...I can do repair work, yard work, painting..." "Painting?" The woman interjected. "Yes ma'am, I'm a very careful painter he said excitedly at the prospect of work." "Well then, we might just have something for you then." "My husband is out, but he and I have been meaning to paint the porch out back for weeks but haven't found the time. We even bought several cans of green paint. I'd love to surprise my husband when he gets home. If you wanted to paint the porch, I'd be happy to pay you. In fact, if you were really careful and did the trim and kept the paint of the windows, I'd pay you something extra." "Yes, ma'am, I'll be really careful and start right away!" The man exclaimed. So the woman explained that the paint was out in the garage next to the car. A few hours later, the man knocked on the door. "You're done already? That's great!" The woman said. "Yes ma'am." He replied. "Two coats! ... But I gotta' tell you something, that car I painted isn't a *Porsche*, it's a *Mercedes*!"

A small misunderstanding can lead to big problems. And when it comes to the word of God and understanding Jesus' commands to His disciples, we need to be careful to fully understand what He says for us to do.

But before we get going, let's pray.

[Prayer]

Now going back to Matt. 28:16-20...This is a wonderful missions passage. But it is unfortunately often misunderstood. People are often left wondering how exactly they are called to be involved in missions.

Now this is missions month here at Cornerstone. It is a time when we focus our attention more intently on God's mission around the world, and our part in that mission. Note that I said it was **missions month**, not **missionary appreciation** month. Now there's no question we certainly appreciate all the missionaries we support through God's generous help, the perils they face, and sacrifices they make, all for the sake of His Name and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But my point is that if you or I get to the end of the month, and we've listened to a few visiting missionaries, prayed for the spread of the gospel, and patted our fellow missionary on the back, and think we're done, then we're missing the point. This is not simply a giant pep rally for beleaguered missionaries, although Christ-like encouragement is certainly warranted and needed. This month is missions month. And we cannot be Christians without intricately and inextricably being involved (word?) in God's mission for the world **long-term**.

And this is what causes problems for many people. You see, either this passage applies to **all** of us or it doesn't. (And by the way, it does.) So when we see the disciples commanded to go and make disciples of all nations, we understand the task for missionaries. But what about those not called to full-time missionary work, the "Stay-putters", so to speak? We find ourselves sitting here wondering, "if we are commanded to go, if I have been commanded to go, why is my zip code still the same?"

We don't do missions by proxy. We don't have stand-ins. We are **all** called to "Go". The key is...there's more to "going" than jumping on a plane.

This brings me to what I'd like to tackle today.

## BIND: How are “Stay-putters” to “Go” “?”

I’m going to suggest that it all comes down to a phrase: “**GOING BEYOND**”, and I’ll explain what I mean by that, but first let’s get back to our passage.

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As we just read the passage, we know Jesus is up on a Galilean mountaintop giving instructions to his disciples. But how exactly did they get to that point? It’s helpful to give a little background.

Just about a week before this passage, Jesus was raised from the dead. We know from the other gospels that he appeared to and visited his disciples at least a few times. At the tomb, he tells Mary (x2) to tell his disciples (Eleven now, since Judas has been lost) to meet him at a certain mountain in Galilee. It takes a week to get there, and all the way, they’re brimming with expectation and apprehension. “First our master dies, then is raised again, and now he wants us to meet him a week’s walk away at a mountaintop in Galilee of the Gentiles! What’s going to happen there?”

This passage is the last word in Matthew’s gospel. The last scene is important in any book or movie, but in the ancient world, this is the spot where everything comes together, the part which carries great weight, the pinnacle so to speak. And that is precisely where Matthew puts us. Up on a mountain top.

Now Matthew LOVES mountaintops, he consistently tells us about many of the most important events happening on a mountaintop. The temptations of Jesus (ch. 4), Sermon on the Mount (ch. 5), Feeding of 4000 (Mt. 15), Transfiguration (Mt. 17), and now here we find Matthew once again putting us on a hill, waiting for a word from Jesus.

The first thing I’d like to note is that this passage DOES indeed apply to us as much as the original Eleven disciples. How so? In verse 20, Jesus promises to be with us to the “end of the age/world”. Since the disciples only lived a generation, this word is spoken to ALL the readers of the Gospel and is as real and impacting to us here today as those standing in His midst. And indeed He is still standing in OUR midst.

So what did Jesus say? There are three main themes I think the Holy Spirit intends for us to focus on today from this passage. All three I've titled under the heading of "GOING BEYOND."

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(I use the word "Going", even though we need to be careful in understanding what specifically Jesus means by "Going." But first, let's go to the first theme that we find in vss. 16-17, which is for us to...)

1. "Go beyond our doubts" (uncertainties)

Matthew 28:16-17 <sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.)

Now I don't know if that strikes you as strange, but it's always been a little problematic for me. Worshipping and doubting doesn't seem to go hand-in-hand. Some suggest that maybe only *some* worshiped, *some* others hesitated because didn't know if it was Jesus or if they should worship him.<sup>1</sup> That seems unlikely, since they've already seen Jesus post-resurrection and trudged 50 miles to meet him there. Others suggest that maybe there were more disciples there than the Eleven, and those are the dubious ones.<sup>2</sup>

But the answer lies within understanding two things: 1. What they're doubting, and 2. Why Jesus mentions his authority. I think the most likely way to understand this "doubting" is to notice that the only other place that this word here translated as "doubt"<sup>3</sup> appears in the NT is back in Chp. 14 where Peter starts to walk out on the water to Jesus, then seeing the stormy waters is afraid

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<sup>1</sup> Many suggest that the Eleven were split on the matter, some reacting better than others. Others suggest that maybe it was tough to make out whether it was Jesus from far away. Calvin suggests that maybe they all (or many) had doubts through terror/amazement at first, and then worshipped as Jesus drew closer.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Zondervan Ill. Bible Backgrounds, Clinton Arnold, ed., p.189. This perspective holds that the Eleven were faithful, but there were many more disciples there besides the Eleven, and these were the ones who doubted. Possible, but it forces the text to include people it hasn't mentioned specifically, although they point to Matt. 28:10 "tell my brothers" which could have included more than the Eleven.

<sup>3</sup> Greek: "ἐδίστασαν" and aorist 3 person verb from the root word "διστάζω" meaning "doubt/waiver/hesitate" per BDAG (1957). The only other place it appears in the New Testament or LXX is Matt. 14:31. The root "δίς" which means "twice" or "doubly" (per Strong's).

of what will happen to him and cries out to Jesus to save him. Jesus says, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Peter did not doubt Jesus as Lord or that he could save him, he was uncertain of whether **he could do likewise**.

(So it seems best to take their doubt to mean “uncertain” of their own selves, especially when we next look at why we are able to go beyond our uncertainties – namely, the authority of Jesus...)

Notice in vs. 19 the repeating of all. *All* authority, *all* nations, *all* things

This “all authority” is divine authority & power

- a. All things subordinate to His divine will – no plans can thwart him
- b. All things derivative of His divine power – nobody has power of their own outside of God’s that can stop Him
- c. All His will...**will** be done, on earth and in heaven.

But in the context of the passage, **Why** is this authority **important**?

- We were given authority not only to believe the gospel, but to spread it to all nations & peoples.
  - Not only “my personal Lord”, but “Lord of the Universe, Hope of the World.”
- It emphasizes the divine edict to spread the gospel overrules our wishes or discomforts, and it overrules even earthly authority contrary to spreading the Gospel.
  - We are to make **God’s** priorities **our** priorities
- We can take heart that since He has authority over all that when he tells us that His plan is to advance his church and stake His claim in the kingdom which is already His, that **it will happen**, and we can be part of that.

(This is why he tells his uncertain disciples that He has all authority, to ease their uncertainties and foster confidence for the task He is about to give them, which is rooted in this authority...)

- Go beyond uncertainty/uneasiness/anxieties/qualms/nagging doubts
  - i. Be hopeful of the future, because He is in it with us
- How? Many ways, one mentioned here.
  - i. Notice the “Therefore...” – it is *because* of his authority that Jesus tells us to get over our doubts
  - ii. We go beyond our doubts through resting our uncertainties within Christ’s authority
  - iii. Through trust in Jesus & His authority: “I am here. I am with you always. I AM!”

(So the first theme Jesus commissions us to do is to **go beyond our doubts**...The second theme Jesus commissions us to do is to...)

## 2. GO BEYOND OUR SELVES

- Multiply – By making disciples – not an individual faith, but a body
- We Westerners tend to over-individualize the Gospel message
- Get this from “make disciples” – grammar (one imperative, three participles (“go”, “teach”, “baptize”)
  - i. DISCIPLE! – grammar → not just making but being; don’t just teach them Jesus’ commands...teach them to obey them.  
Through example of living out your faith.
- Don’t misread the grammar
  - i. As “Go”...and then
  - ii. As “while going”
- Part of force (“Go and disciple”) –called “attendant circumstance”<sup>4</sup>
  - i. (come & see; run & tell; come & bow, twist & shout...)
- Make disciples (let’s not lose sight)
  - i. What is making disciples really?

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<sup>4</sup> For more info about attendant circumstance participles, cf. D. Wallace, Greek Grammar, pp. 640-645.

1. (not converts) – teach them to obey... to obey what? Christ's commands.
  - a. Teaching takes time (Paul model)
  - b. Baptize "into" a growing community
- ii. Discipleship In Jesus' day (disciples making their own disciples)
- iii. Whose disciples are we to make? (**Jesus'** , not our own)
- We must spread the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified
  - i. Not withdraw as the disciples did at first
- ***We go beyond our selves by making disciples for Christ***

(So we are commissioned by Christ to go beyond our uncertainties, and to go beyond our selves. Third and finally, we are commissioned to...)

### 3. GO BEYOND OUR BORDERS.

- Borders – not simply geographic borders
- Nations (vs. 18) – explain what it is, what it isn't, what it means.
  - i. Ethnos – not really a geographic word, more of a people word
  - ii. People groups – both abroad and in our midst
    1. Across the world, but also across the tracks
    2. The ends of the earth, AND the ends of the street
  - iii. This is the meaning of "nations" & how we must think.
- Balance of here & there
  - i. ILL: One, two, skip a few illustration:
    1. My kids like to play a little game. They tell me, "Daddy, listen how fast I can count to 100. One, two, skip a few, 99, 100! That's fast!"
    2. Often times, we tend to do missions like this. We're really good at the "One, two" and the "99, 100", but we forget all those between our direct circle and the ends of the earth.
    3. What this means for the "in-betweeners"

- Progression – special task of missions to keep moving out (Acts 1:8)
  - i. African Bishop – before leaving to be missionary, consider whether the place you’re going to is less Christianized than the place you’re leaving.
  - ii. Ends of the earth here.
- How?
  - i. We go beyond our borders through loving those around us, and engaging our neighbors meaningfully and intentionally.

## Go beyond Our Doubts, Our Selves, and Our Borders.

### CONCLUSION:

The disciples had taken 1000’s of steps on their journey to that mountain in Galilee. But Christ was more focused on the next step for them as His disciples...to take the gospel to the world beyond.

And that’s what we have to do...

We have to go beyond what Jesus did, and move to *why* he did it.

We have to move beyond the crucifixion and the resurrection and headfirst into the book of Acts. We go to the mission of the church, which is Jesus’ redemption of the world through the church. Every nation...every tribe...every language. We need to reach the nations, and reach our neighbors.

Missions is not simply a proxy enterprise. WE are the proxy. We are the ones Christ gives authority to – to reach others for his name and in his name.

“Going beyond” doesn’t mean leaving it behind, but rather continuing the work which Jesus commissioned to be done on that mountain so long ago. This is making the cross and the resurrection living, giving it life today. Certainly it is a historical reality, and certainly much was accomplished at the cross. But the word “accomplished” is both a “done deal” and a still-unfolding narrative that runs to today and beyond. What Jesus “accomplished” at the cross is still being

realized as each day more people turn their lives over to him and strive to become His disciples & obey His commands. The kingdom is both here and not yet, for the apostles, this is the beginning, for us, it is the now and the future.

The way that we are to go beyond is threefold: we **go beyond our doubts**, we **go beyond our selves**, and we **go beyond our borders**.

- We go beyond our doubts through resting our uncertainties within Christ's authority.
- We go beyond our selves by making disciples for Christ
- We go beyond our borders through loving those around us, and engaging our neighbors meaningfully and intentionally.

And listen: Jesus is not asking us to pick up the baton and run with it, he's asking us to hold the baton as he runs with us. Jesus is not just our personal savior, our personal Lord, but Lord of the nations & hope to a dying world. We are to show the same love for the nations & peoples of the world that **He** does. The love that made it worth His humbling himself and dying on a cross.

To do that we:

**Go beyond Our Doubts, Our Selves, and Our Borders.**

Let's pray.