

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 4

by Zac Poonen

The second half of the Great Commission, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to do all that Jesus commanded, is equally important as evangelism and is necessary for the body of Christ to function properly.

Duration: 25:59

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Disciple Making", "Great Commission"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission in its entirety, highlighting the significance of not only evangelism but also disciple-making and teaching all that Jesus commanded. It discusses the balance between evangelistic work and the crucial role of making disciples, even though the latter may not always receive immediate recognition or boastful statistics. The sermon delves into the necessity of prophetic ministry, obedience to God's Word, and the promise of God's presence and authority when engaging in teaching others to follow Jesus.

Transcript

We turn once again to Matthew chapter 28 verse 19 and 20 and our subject is all that Jesus taught that we've been considering in our last sessions or subtitled completing the Great Commission. There are many Christians who imagine that they are fulfilling the Great Commission when they have only fulfilled half of it and neglected the second half almost completely. The first half is very important, evangelism, reaching out to the lost, to those who have never heard the gospel, but the second half is equally important.

Who are we to say that one half is more important than the other half and yet the great tragedy in Christendom is that many who are fulfilling the first half do not realize how important it is to fulfill the second half and what is worse there are many who fulfill the first half who despise those who are seeking to fulfill the second half. If we are humble we will see that we are fellow workers in the body of Christ and that one is as important as the other. The man who goes out to reach those who have never heard the gospel with the message of Christ dying for their sins is as important as the one who is seeking to complete the job by making that person into a disciple and in teaching them to do all that Jesus commanded.

It's very exciting to do the first part of the gospel because you have so many wonderful stories to relate. Missionary work, evangelistic work is always exciting. There are stories to relate, people delivered from demons and idolatry and many things like that and especially a lot of statistics to report.

Evangelists can boast about the number of people they have brought to Christ. What about a person who's taking that convert and making him a disciple? He doesn't have statistics to boast about but you may discover when Christ comes back that that person has done a more faithful job without getting any honor on the earth for his making disciples and generally speaking Christians like to do those ministries that they can report about and where they can quote numbers and that's why the Mark 16 15 aspect of the Great Commission is far more popular than the Matthew 28 verse 19 and 20. We were talking about teaching people to do all that Jesus commanded.

Supposing you spend 25 years reaching out into different parts of the world, preaching the gospel, doing evangelism, you probably, if you're an evangelist, have the opportunity to report statistics of hundreds or perhaps thousands of people whom you have brought to Christ. But if you spent those 25 years teaching a group of converts who are not yet disciples to do all that Jesus commanded, you may not have much to report in terms of statistics but you have produced Christlike people who are a far better testimony for Christ on earth and whom God can show forth to the devil as specimens of people who were redeemed from the nature of Adam and who could manifest the nature of Christ. That brings glory in heaven, not on this earth.

So if you're a Christian who's seeking honor from men, honor from fellow Christians, you will not care much about the second part of the Great Commission because you don't have much to report. You'll only be interested in the first part because your interest is statistics and numbers and the honor of men. The Old Testament prophets were never popular.

The false prophets were popular in Israel. What is the difference between the two? One of the differences was this. The false prophets told people what they liked to hear.

The true prophets told the people what they needed to hear from God. And very often it was a rebuke for their sin and their worldliness and their idolatry and their adultery and their going away from God and in fact calling them to repentance. So prophetic ministry has never been popular either in the Old Testament or in the New Testament.

New Testament prophetic ministry is in the same way calling God's people back to him, to back to the Word, back to obedience to the Scriptures, back to obeying all that Jesus taught. And that's different from evangelistic ministry. But the body of Christ cannot be built only by prophets or only by evangelists.

We can use an illustration. Evangelism or fulfilling the first half of the Great Commission and it certainly is the first half in Mark 16 15 can be likened to taking food from a plate and putting into our mouth. What is the purpose of all evangelism? To make someone who is not a member of the body of Christ, a member of the body of Christ.

That's evangelism essentially. An unbeliever, idol worshiper or person without any God, making him a member of the body of Christ. That's what evangelism is designed to do.

So we can use an illustration from taking food which is in a plate which is not a part of my body at the moment and making it a part of my body as a picture of how we bring a non-christian to become a part of

the body of Christ. So how does this happen? First of all I see the food and I take it with my hand and put it into my mouth. This is evangelism.

Taking the unbeliever and bringing him into Christ. But this food, if it remains in my mouth, is never going to be a part of my body. If I keep it in my mouth it will rot and I'll spit it out.

And a lot of people who raise their hands and sign decision cards and say they've come to Christ are like that food kept in the mouth. You go there and see these, go and visit these 500 people who signed decision cards and you may find maybe one of them became a real disciple and the other 499 just drifted away. It happens all the time.

And even after it's gotten in the mouth, that's not enough. The teeth have got to chew that food and it goes down my throat into the stomach and there all types of acids are thrown upon it to break it down so that it's no longer a potato or a chapati or rice and it gets converted into other forms. And after a process of digestion and things that happen inside the body, finally that food becomes a part of my body.

This is a very gentle ministry, the initial part of taking the food and putting it in the mouth. This is evangelism. But after that other parts of the body take over and do things which the hand can never do, which the evangelist can never do.

And that is prophetic ministry, teaching ministry, shepherding ministry, apostolic ministry that builds that person to become a living, functioning, effective, powerful member of the body of Christ. And like that food, after a few weeks it's no longer a potato or a chapati. It's become flesh and blood and bones.

And that's how it should be with every person whom the evangelist brings to Christ. So who is more needed? The evangelist or the prophet or the shepherd or the teacher? It's like asking, is the hand more important or are the teeth more important or the stomach more important or other things more important? Other parts of the body. There's no way of comparing, because if the hand doesn't take the food and put it in, the teeth and the stomach got nothing to do.

And if the hand does the job of putting the food into the mouth and the teeth and stomach don't do anything, then also it's wasted. So there's no question of thinking that the evangelist is more important than the prophet or the prophet is more important than the evangelist. We're told in Ephesians in chapter 4, these are the words that Jesus wanted to speak to his disciples when he was with them on the earth.

He wanted to teach them about the function of apostles and prophets and evangelists and shepherds and teachers, like it says in Ephesians 4.11. These are the gifts that he gave to the church after he ascended to heaven. He wanted to tell his disciples on earth about it, but like we saw earlier in John 16 verse 12, he says, I want to teach you these things, but you can't understand them now because you don't have the Holy Spirit. But once they received the Holy Spirit, they could understand.

Paul could understand that when Jesus ascended, Ephesians 4.10, above all the heavens, from there he gave some as apostles. Now these are not the apostles that he appointed on the earth, those he appointed when he was on earth, but these are apostles that he appointed from heaven, those who would go forth and plant local churches and prophets who would diagnose the spiritual condition of people and provide them with a solution, evangelists who would bring the non-Christian into the body of Christ and shepherds who would take care of the young ones and teachers who would teach them God's Word. All of these Christ gave for the purpose of equipping all the believers so that all the believers could build, the

verse 12, the body of Christ.

These are not the folks who build the body of Christ. Ephesians 5, 4 verse 11, 12 says these five gifted people equip all the other believers who don't have these gifts and those believers, verse 12, build the body of Christ. So in the body of Christ, just like in the human body, every part has a function.

So we're not comparing those who fulfill Mark 16, 15 with those who fulfill Matthew 28, 19. These are people, anybody who compares that is a person who's ignorant of God's ways. He needs this one and that one.

It's like saying, is your left hand or your right hand important? Which one would you like to cut off? One may appear to do a more important function than another, but both are equally necessary in the body. God has determined that. Every part of the body must be healthy and muscular to be useful to fulfill its function.

So teaching people all that Jesus commanded, the command in Matthew 28, verse 20 is, teach them to do all that I commanded you. And in order to support us in doing this, he began that last commission with these words, Matthew 28 and verse 18, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Now we must believe that if you are to go out and fulfill this great commission.

If I don't believe that, I'm going to give up after a little while because Christian work can be a very discouraging work. You don't see results immediately. Neither the evangelist nor the prophet nor the apostle sees results immediately.

Sometimes it requires a lot of labor to bring a child, I mean just like bringing up a child to adulthood. You know what a lot of labor that involves for a father and mother. And through the years of planning churches and establishing believers, I found it's very similar trying to lead them up to godliness, believers to godliness.

It's very easy to get discouraged unless we realize that the one who is sending me forth into this ministry is one who's got all authority in heaven and earth. And he is supporting me with that authority. And so I look at this part of the Great Commission like this.

Here's the second part of the Great Commission that we've been considering. Matthew 28 verse 19 and 20. Go make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Teach them to do by doing yourself first. Don't that I commanded you. And this commission we can say is bracketed between two of the most fantastic statements that Jesus made.

The first is verse 18. All authority in heaven and earth is given to me. That's the first thing.

And it's bracketed on the other side with this fantastic statement. Lo I'm with you always even to the end of the age. Now if I have a doubt about either of these two facts, I'm not going to fulfill that second part of the Great Commission.

Because I found in 50 years of Christian ministry it can be pretty discouraging. If you are not convinced that the one who sent you forth is the one who's got all authority in heaven and earth. In the heavenlies where there's the second heavens where the demons dwell.

And on earth with all people on earth, Christ has got all authority. I believe that. And when I go forth trying to fulfill this part of the Great Commission, there's a specific promise that he will be with me always.

Now Christians have got a very bad habit of trying to claim a promise without fulfilling the condition. For example, if we're told believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. And you say well I'm not going to fulfill the condition.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ I'm still going to be saved. Wouldn't you think that's crazy? If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Now if you don't fulfill the condition of confessing your sin, how do you believe that he's going to forgive your sin? The promises of God are conditional.

I mean there are material promises like God makes the sun to rise and the good and the evil and he makes the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous. That's okay. Material things he gives to everybody without any conditions.

But when it comes to the spiritual promises of God beginning with the forgiveness of sins without repentance and faith in Christ, nobody gets forgiveness of sins. Justification is by faith. Sanctification is by faith.

God gives his grace to the humble. If you're humble you get grace. There's a condition for the promise.

Now how is it that so many Christians who believe that in all these other areas that I've just mentioned, come to this promise, lo I'm with you always, unto the end of the age and try to claim it without fulfilling the condition. That amazes me. I mean they'll be surprised if I preach that you can be forgiven even if you don't repent and believe.

You can be forgiven even if you don't confess your sins. They'd say that's ridiculous. The Bible says if you confess your sins he's faithful and just to forgive you.

Right. Well let me also say it says the Lord will be with you always to the end of the age if you go and make disciples and baptize them and teach them to do all that I've commanded you. The Lord said then lo I'm with you always.

So it's a promise specifically given to those who go forth to teach others to do all that Jesus has commanded. Now I've spent more than 30 years, 35 years seeking to fulfill that. Teaching people to do all that Jesus commanded in many parts of the world and through CDs and the internet and literature and everything and I can testify that I've really experienced the presence of the Lord with me and the authority of the Lord.

So I want to encourage you to believe that God's promises are true. His authority will back you if you go forth seeking to teach people to do all that Jesus commanded and by doing it yourself first and he'll be with you always. And you know one of the results of his being with us always is he delivers us from depression and discouragement and gloom and bad moods and all types of things.

How in the world can I have a bad mood if Jesus is with me all the time? How in the world can I be discouraged and fearful if Jesus is with me all the time? A lot of people imagine that Christ is with them. He's not. They're not seeking to do all that Jesus commanded.

They're not seeking to teach other people what Jesus commanded. So there's a condition and I want to encourage you to see that clearly. We were looking last time at Matthew chapter 4. As I said the very first thing that Jesus commanded or Jesus taught rather.

The very first thing that Jesus taught after his being anointed with the Holy Spirit was that we cannot live if we don't receive the words that God speaks. We can't fulfill and satisfy God's heart. Fulfill God's purpose and satisfy God's heart if we merely serve him.

A lot of Christians find a satisfaction in saying well I'm doing this for the Lord. I'm doing that for the Lord. I'm running an orphanage.

I'm running a Bible school and I'm helping people. I'm giving money to these people who are in need and I'm going here and doing that and they're always thinking of what they're doing for the Lord. That's good.

I wouldn't despise that. We need to serve the Lord till he comes. It says in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58 be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

I want to do that to the end of my life or till Christ comes. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. I never want to stop serving the Lord.

So I'm not despising that. I believe we must serve but I'd say more important than service is receiving the Word of God. Man shall not live by serving God alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God and a classic example of this and this remember this is the first spoken words of Jesus after his anointing.

So it must be very significant. All that Jesus taught, here's the very first thing that he taught. The very first thing.

Learn to receive the Word of God continuously every day. The Scriptures must come alive to you every day. In the early days people didn't have a Bible like we have today.

We are so privileged to have the Bible and then of course you must read the Bible every day if you're going to receive God's Word every day. But in the early days when they didn't have a Bible they could still receive the Holy Spirit reminding them of what they heard from the Apostles or a Christian who doesn't have a Bible who's in prison for his faith and sitting in a prison can still receive God's Word every day even though he doesn't have a Bible open in front of him because he's read it in the days when he was not in prison and that's why it's so important to read and meditate on God's Word because in our moment of need God through the Holy Spirit will give us that particular word that will be the solution to our problem and that will be the answer to our need and that will be the promise that we can claim. This is illustrated in a story that we read in Luke chapter 10 and verse 38 to 42.

There we read about Jesus entering the house of Mary and Martha and there we read that a woman named Martha Luke chapter 10 verse 38 a woman named Martha received him into the house welcomed him and she had a sister called Mary who sat at Jesus feet listening to his word. Now remember connect this with what we read earlier man shall not live by food alone but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth here are the two options food is that important yes it is but what's more important is receiving the word that proceeds from God's mouth and you see this illustrated so vividly here in these two sisters Martha was distracted with preparing food for whom not for herself she was very very unselfish do you know how much labor it takes to cook food for 13 hungry men Jesus and his 12 disciples and here she was slogging away in the kitchen working hard not for herself but for the Lord spending her money going to the market getting things to prepare food for the Lord spending time money energy sacrificing to do work for the Lord now maybe you're like that maybe you're sacrificing time money energy doing so many

things for the Lord here and there good and you would think like Martha would think well when I've done all this and I come before the Lord he's gonna say well done good and faithful servant you've done a great job but that's not what she hears when she comes to Jesus inwardly when she was cooking all that food she was getting irritated with her sister Mary and whenever a person is not at rest in his heart it means something is wrong she was not addressed she was wondering why Mary is not sick coming and helping me and Jesus rebukes her and says Martha food is not the most important thing to hear my word is far more important and that's what Mary has chosen Luke 10:42 that will not be taken away from her do you see there man shall not live by food alone what did Jesus want here all that service what does Jesus want from you service is good he read later on that Mary served Jesus by pouring out a perfume at his feet but the first most important thing was to receive the Word of God so this is what Jesus taught so let's learn this lesson first of all one thing is needful not 25 things Luke 10:42 to sit at Jesus feet every day to have that attitude all the time to receive what he has to say to us personally let's pray our Father help us to recognize this one thing that you said was needful for each of us to hear your word and to obey it in Jesus name Amen

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