

*Mondovi: Our Savior's, Gilmanton & Montana: Salem United Methodist Churches  
5.31.2026, Trinity Sunday, Rev. Hyuntae Kim, Ph.D.*

## The Missional Desire of Jesus

Matthew 28:16–20

Let us pray: Triune God, through today's Word, pour into us the united desire of the heart of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so that we may live and act according to that desire. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is truly good to see you again after four weeks. I had the opportunity to see my mother-in-law for the first time in sixteen months, and I could see that she had become much weaker. She was once young, healthy, and sharp-minded, and it was painful to witness how much she had declined. At the same time, it reminded me how brief our lives on this earth really are. It made me reflect on the importance of not wasting the time God has given me, but instead faithfully doing the work that pleases him.

My mother-in-law was no longer able to read Scripture well on her own. So she read the Bible aloud every day together with my wife, and during the rest of the day, my wife had her listen to YouTube recordings of Scripture being read aloud. She also chose a verse from each day's reading, and they repeated it together several times. From time to time, they reviewed the verses they had already recited. My mother-in-law greatly enjoyed repeating the Scriptures after my wife. Whenever she heard or recited God's Word, she would always respond with a heartfelt "Amen."

The Word of God carries his very breath. Scripture not only reveals who God is, but also gives us the faith to believe in him. It teaches us the purpose of life, fills us with hope, and gives us the strength to live according to God's will.

Today's passage, found at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, contains one of Christ's clearest commands to all Christians. It is the essential command he gave his disciples before his ascension, a command that serves almost like his final testament to them. Because of its supreme importance, we call it the **Great Commission**.

Such an important command was entrusted to what kind of people? It was given to the disciples before they had received the Holy Spirit from above. They were still bewildered and trying to make sense of everything that had happened. In fact, among them were some who had seen the risen Jesus and worshiped him, yet still wondered whether what they were experiencing was real or not. Jesus did not focus on their present condition; he saw their future. He entrusted this crucial mission to people who were still uncertain and full of questions. In the same way, regardless of our present condition, Jesus speaks this same command to us and invites us to participate in his work.

The place to which each of us is called is different. Our gifts are different, and our roles are different. Yet the essence of the Great Commission is the same for every believer. Some are called to go far away. In my case, God sent me from Korea to the United States, which is why I am here today. For me, this is a distant place. For many of you, however, this is home. Many are called to serve faithfully in a particular community or field of ministry. Yet Christians are, by their very nature, people whose hearts embrace the

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whole world. Whether we go far away or serve close to home, we are called to have a global vision. This is because Christ, who lives within us, is greater than the universe itself and reigns over all the nations. Therefore, when necessary, God sends his servants even to people they have never met before.

Had those young American missionaries not come to Chosun, a kingdom long before the Republic of Korea was established as a free democratic nation, the Korea we know today would not exist, and my people would likely have remained in darkness. Behind those who dedicated themselves as missionaries stood faithful prayer warriors and generous supporters who sustained the mission through prayer and resources. They did not go out personally like Paul, but like the believers in Jerusalem and Antioch, they carried the mission field in their hearts and interceded for it. They were “sending missionaries.”

Our forefathers in the faith were able to change the world because they learned through God's Word who he is and believed him. My prayer is that through today's passage we may come to know more clearly who it is that gives us this Great Commission, understand exactly what that commission is, learn how it is to be fulfilled, and discover the blessings that come from living in obedience to it. May God grant us that grace today.

In the military, when a commander is a capable and respected leader, the soldiers' morale is high, and their ability to accomplish their mission is greatly enhanced. Today's passage teaches us who our Commander is and what kind of Lord he is.

Our Commander, Jesus, declares, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**” Jesus does not possess merely one kind of authority. Rather, all authority in heaven and on earth is subject to him. For example, our life and death, our blessings and hardships, are under his authority. By his wisdom and power, he determines times and seasons. He heals diseases and casts out demons. He has authority to forgive sins. He commands the angels and possesses the authority to judge. It is this Lord, who possesses such unlimited authority, who gives us our mission as our Commander—the Great Commission.

At the heart of this command is one simple instruction: **Make disciples.** In English, the passage can seem somewhat complicated because it includes four actions: *go, make disciples, baptize, and teach.* But in the Greek text, there is only one main verb: “**make disciples.**” The other verbs are participles. When participles are attached to a main verb, they often describe the manner or means by which the main command is carried out.

**Whom are we commanded to make disciples of?** Not only the neighbor next door, but *all nations.* How can we make disciples of all nations? Did Peter ever go to Korea? Of course not. But the point is that we are to keep all nations in mind, and then go to the sphere to which the Holy Spirit leads each of us. And as we do so, we look forward in faith to the disciples we raise going into places we ourselves could never reach.

There are three ways the Lord gives us to fulfill this great command given to the church.

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**First, “Go.”** As soldiers under orders, we must have the mindset to go carry out our mission; that is the first step in making disciples. We gather at church to worship, to learn the Scriptures, and to break bread for fellowship, but the essence of the church is not *staying*; it is *going*. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.’” —Romans 10:14–15.

When you walk out the church doors after worship, may you step out with the mindset and faith that you are going to carry out this Great Commission. In your lifetime, make at least one disciple. Begin with those closest to you, your children, grandchildren, and friends.

We should not be people who are courageous only inside the church; I pray that we will recover the spirituality of the early church that demonstrated the power of Jesus *outside* the church. The reason God placed the church in the world is to release the gospel into the world so that what once lay under Satan’s curse and dominion may come under God’s blessing and rule.

For us to become a church that *goes*, each of us, who *are* the church, must wait to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 24 and Acts 1, the Lord told them to wait for what the Father had promised. We cannot go with our own strength; we must go *with* the Holy Spirit. We must receive strategy from the Holy Spirit.

After obeying the Spirit’s leading and going, what is the second way we make disciples? It is to **baptize**. At the time Jesus gave this command, the church had not yet been established. The subject of the verb “baptize” is *you*. This is a command not only to the eleven disciples but to all of us who read these words today. Then naturally a question arises: Isn’t baptism something only pastors administer?

Historically, after Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity, the church became institutionalized, and baptism became formalized as something pastors administer. Most things began to revolve around the clergy. But if we look carefully at Scripture, we see that according to the original command Jesus gave, baptism was administered without distinction between laypeople and clergy.

John 4:2 tells us that Jesus Himself did not baptize. His disciples did. At that time, the disciples had not yet received the office of apostles. And who was it that evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch and baptized him? It was Philip the deacon. When Peter preached at the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, he then told the brothers who had come with him to baptize those who had gathered there. If Jesus had determined that only pastors must administer baptism, then Peter would have had to do it all himself. Paul also did not baptize very many people. In Acts 18:8, we read that when Paul preached in Corinth, many Corinthians believed in Jesus and were baptized. Yet in 1 Corinthians 1:13–15, Paul says he personally baptized only three cases.

Of course, beyond water baptism, when it comes to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, one needs to receive the laying on of hands from a minister who carries the anointing of the Spirit. The Samaritans

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received water baptism from Philip the deacon, but they had not yet received the Spirit, so the apostles from Jerusalem were invited to come and lay hands on them.

In any case, according to Scripture, it is fitting that the one who evangelizes should be the one to baptize. To do this within the context of the modern church while avoiding conflict with denominational regulations, I believe the evangelizer could place their hand together with the pastor's hand and administer the baptism under the pastor's oversight.

Because only pastors have administered baptism, laypeople have become weakened and placed in a merely passive, "receiving instruction" position. When laypeople bring someone to church, the pastor preaches the gospel, the pastor baptizes, and the pastor teaches. So, the pastor's spiritual maturity grows, but the laypeople often do not grow as they should.

In order to baptize someone, there must first be union with Christ. Going down into the water symbolizes dying with Christ, and coming up out of the water symbolizes being raised to live with Christ. When a person confesses faith that they have died to sin and now live for righteousness and for God through their union with Christ, then baptism may be administered.

After baptizing them, what is the third way we make disciples? It is **to teach**. This does not mean teaching as if in a school, but teaching in such a way that they grow into mature and strong disciples who *obey* what Jesus commanded. This teaching is *discipleship training*, a life-on-life apprenticeship. It is not merely intellectual. By worshiping together, they learn with their whole being how to worship God; by praying together, they learn how to pray. We should do what Jesus did with His disciples. We should let them see the sick being healed, demons being cast out, and the gospel being proclaimed.

Some of you may feel, "Ah, this is too difficult." You may think, "Only Jesus' disciples or certain gifted ministers can do that, how could an ordinary layperson like me?" If what you have seen or believed until now does not align with Scripture, then lay it down and believe the Word. Faith comes from hearing, so proclaim this Word to yourself hundreds of times. The moment will come when the Holy Spirit, the Lord of the Word, begins to work.

When we live according to the Word, what did the Lord promise He would do? "Behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This is **Immanuel**. The Commander who holds all authority promises to be with His army until the mission entrusted to them is fully accomplished. By responding to this invitation in faith, may you enjoy the special blessing of Immanuel. Amen.

Let us pray: Gracious Lord, thank you for calling us to follow you and to participate in your work. When we feel weak or uncertain, remind us that your authority is greater than our fears and that your Spirit goes with us. Help us to become faithful disciples who make disciples through our words, our love, and our lives. And as we go into the world this week, may we live in the promise of your presence: "I am with you always." We pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.