

Jesus' Commission and Ascension

(Matthew 28:1-20)

Yearly Theme: "Patience is..."

Series Title: "Perfect Patience"

April 24th, 2022

Something to think about:

Today we come to the end of a story, and the continuation (or beginning) of another. Jesus has completed the task that He was sent for by the Father in Heaven. He had conquered sin and death through the cross and the resurrection. Now He was going back to the Father, but not until a final word with the disciples. As they stand by the Sea of Galilee on a hilltop, Jesus gives them final instructions. Let's pick up the story from the day of Jesus' resurrection from the tomb in Matthew's Gospel:

Matthew 28:1-20 (NLT),

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

² Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. ³ His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

⁵ Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. ⁷ And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you."

⁸ The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. ⁹ And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

¹¹ As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. ¹² A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. ¹³ They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.' ¹⁴ If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble." ¹⁵ So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."¹

Acts 1:9-11 (NLT),

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"²

Here's the takeaway this morning:

Key Point: "Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the church is empowered and commanded to preach the Good News to everyone."

What were the final words of Jesus before He left His followers? Let's take a look:

- Jesus holds all authority in heaven and on earth.

Daniel 7:13-14 (NLT), ¹³ As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

- Because of Jesus' authority, His followers are to go make disciples, baptize, and teach them everything He commanded them.

Getting people through the doors of a building is not what Jesus mandated. Getting people into the family of GOD through belief and faith in Christ is what He mandated, and even died for!

- Jesus ascended and will return. Until then, His church is to remain faithful in the meantime.

Bruce Barton stresses that "The disciples needed to see Jesus make this transition. The Ascension confirmed for them that Jesus truly was God. In addition, they witnessed the fact that he had physically left earth and had returned to his heavenly home; thus, the remaining work would be done by the witnesses he had left behind, operating in the power of the promised Holy Spirit."³

Something to take home:

Michael Green writes about the Great Commission by concluding, "That [it] is a very comprehensive commission. It represents Christ's standing orders for his church. Unfortunately, many churches in the West have to a large extent neglected it. Congregations and clergy seem committed to maintenance, not to mission."⁴

Are we guilty of this here in Butler, Pennsylvania? Are we guilty of this at North Main? As one great Pennsylvania pastor once said, "Jesus' last words should be our first concern!" Do we take the Great Commission seriously? Do you take the Great Commission seriously?

Key Point: "Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the church is empowered and commanded to preach the Good News to everyone."

¹ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Mt 28:1–20.

² *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, Ac 1:9–11.

³ Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, *Acts*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 10–11.

⁴ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven, The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England: Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 323.