May 13/14, 2023

# The Resurrected Jesus and Our Mission

*Here and Now Series*

**Matthew 28:16-20**

Pastor Jeff Petersen

As I begin this morning, I want to ask you to think back over your last year. And I want you to think of something good that happened to you in the past year—just one of the many things. Something that was good, or maybe really good, that took place for you or happened to you. Think about that. You got it? Okay, now, here's my question: When that great thing happened, who did you tell? Well, it didn't take me long to process that question. I thought about the last year. Lots of great things happened to me, for me and my story, but one just quickly came to the surface. And it was the first year of the life of my grandson, Ollie. And then when I think about that second question, "Who did I tell?" Anyone! Everyone! *(laughter)* I told friends; I told family; I told strangers; I told all of you in messages. Who did I tell? Who didn't I tell? *(laughter)* But just in case you somehow missed how awesome he is, I just want to take advantage of the opportunity to tell you again this morning and show you one of my latest favorite pictures of him. Here's my sweet grandson, Ollie, who was having some fun time with Grandma Cynci. And he was dedicated right here a few minutes ago on this stage. And I don't know, maybe a few of you saw me, but at that moment, I wasn't up here preaching. I was grandpa in the back taking pictures and video. Ollie has brought tremendous joy to our lives. And I wonder, am I a weirdo or some sort of offensive person because I tell people about the great thing that has happened, and the joy that has come from my beautiful grandson? Think about that, as we walk through our text this morning.

If you have a Bible with you, turn to Matthew, Chapter 28. We're going to look at Matthew 28, beginning in verse 16 this morning. We're starting to come toward the end of our *Here and Now Series,* as we think about the very real difference the resurrected Jesus makes, because of what He did *there and then,* and the difference it makes in our lives *here and now*. And boy, what a great series it has been as we have looked at these post-resurrection appearances, and we've thought about this unique period in history of the forty days between the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. Every one of our weeks so far has been a conversation about what Jesus does for us. As we saw Him showing up in the lives of the disciples, we talked about how Jesus meets us and encourages us in our *sorrow*. We talked about how Jesus brings clarity and perspective in our *confusion*. We talked about how Jesus loves us, even in our *doubt*, and helps us to see His goodness. And then last week Ryan shared with us that amazing story of the restoration of Peter, and we talked about how Jesus restores us and continues to use us and call us even in the midst of our *failure*—week after week after week. What a great God, as this resurrected Jesus has shown up and we've seen the incredible things that He does for us! This week, we turn the corner, and for the first time in our series, we go from talking about what Jesus does for us to what the resurrected Jesus wants from us. We find that in Matthew 28, beginning in verse 16:

> **But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated to them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.** (*NASB, Matthew 28:16-17)

You know, for several weeks during this series, much of the action was taking place in and around Jerusalem. Jesus is appearing at the tomb; He's appearing on the road; He's appearing in the room. All of these things are taking place in and near Jerusalem. But last week the scene shifted, as Ryan told us. Now he was having this encounter with some of the disciples and the restoration of Peter at the Sea of Galilee. And here we're told again, **…the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had designated**. I think it raises an important question: Why Galilee? I mean, if you think about it, it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense because the resurrection took place where? In Jerusalem. All of those first appearances were where? In and near Jerusalem. Where will the ascension be? The ascension takes place from the Mount of Olives, which is right near Jerusalem, when Jesus gives those last words of instruction and visibly ascends before their eyes. He's only on earth in His resurrected form for forty days. So, why Galilee? Well, Jesus sent them to Galilee, and I believe it was for an important purpose, and we'll keep that in mind as we go through our text this morning. So here he says, **…the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee**. Now Matthew wants to make it clear that all eleven of the original disciples are there in this scene. That doesn't mean they're the only people who were here in the scene, but Matthew is picking up the theme of what he's been writing about and, actually, we looked at the first part of chapter 28 on Easter morning itself. And in verse 7, we were told that the angel said that He would meet them in Galilee. And in verse 10, Jesus Himself said that He instructed His brethren to leave for Galilee and there they will see Him.

So, Matthew wants to make it clear. All eleven of the remaining inner circle of the disciples are there at the place where Jesus had designated. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us that after Jesus was resurrected, *over 500 people saw Him alive*. Some scholars believe that might have been in this account in Matthew 28, on this hillside in Galilee. That could help explain a little of what verse 17 says:

> **…and when they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.**

It's possible Matthew is speaking of the eleven. As Bryan told us two weeks ago, this was a very confusing time and Jesus was, in essence, bending over backwards to demonstrate that He was resurrected, and to affirm what was happening in the midst of this confusion and even in the midst of their doubt. So, it's possible that still some of those eleven disciples were doubting. It's also possible that that's referring to others who were disciples, but not among the eleven. But what we know is there is a scene here that is being painted where they are worshiping Jesus, *as the resurrected Christ and the living King.* But some are still uncertain, trying to figure out what in the world is going on. And it's in the midst of that scene that Jesus comes to them again and He gives them their marching orders. Matthew 28, verse 18:

> **And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** (Vs. 18-20)

Now, most of you in this room know that the very familiar words of this passage are referred to as *The Great Commission—the commissioning of the followers of Jesus and what He was calling them to be about.* As you know, there are a lot of things that are taking place here in verses 18

through 20. But it is important for us to realize and understand that in the entire Great Commission there is only one imperative command**.** Of all the things that Jesus talks about in this verse, there is one command that He gives to His followers and that is this: **Make disciples…make disciples!** That is the calling that Jesus is giving to all who would come after Him.

Now, of course that calling takes place in a context, and that context is really without limit. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.** This word that is translated in English as **nations** is the word ethnē, and it doesn't mean what we think of as political nations or countries as we see them on the map today. What it means, actually, is *peoples*. And so what Jesus is saying in this great commission is to go and make disciples of all the peoples on the earth. It harkens forward to what we will see in Revelation when we are told that *people from every tribe and every tongue will gather around the throne to worship Jesus as King.* That's the scope; that's the extent of the calling to **make disciples**.

And it leads back to the question: Why did He send them up to Galilee? I don't know if you're aware or not, but Galilee is about 70 miles from Jerusalem. It would have been about a three to four day walk all the way up there one way. He sends them all the way up to Galilee; and then He's going to send them up all the way back to Jerusalem, prior to the ascension. What's going on here? I think Matthew, at the very end of his Gospel, is trying to make clear that this is a part of demonstrating the purpose of God. See, Matthew beautifully bookends his Gospel with what he's saying in these very last words of his Gospel, with what he said at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. In Matthew chapter 4, Matthew tells us that Jesus began His ministry by withdrawing into Galilee, leaving Nazareth, and Matthew 4, verse 13 says: **…He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.** Verse 14: ***This* was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet.**

So as Matthew is beginning to describe Jesus' earthly ministry, the first thing he does in that description is to reference prophecy from Isaiah. And what did that prophecy say?

> **"THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI,**
> **BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—**
> **THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT,**
> **AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH,**
> **UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."** (Vs. 15-16)

As Jesus appears on the scene, and begins His public ministry, Matthew wants us to understand, right at the beginning of his Gospel, that this goes all the way back to what had been prophesied and foretold: that there would be One who would be coming, who would bring light into the great darkness. And that would begin in a place called Galilee, which was referred to as **Galilee of the Gentiles**. Now here at the end, and the very last words of Matthew's Gospel, he bookends that thought by saying, *Jesus gave us a commission to make disciples of all peoples*. He'll say, in Acts 1, to be His witnesses to the very ends of the earth. It's quite possible that if all of the post-resurrection appearances had taken place in and around Jerusalem, there may have been a deceived notion that thought of Jesus as only the Messiah to the Jewish people. But Jesus, through His words and through His demonstration, makes it crystal clear that that is not the case. He sends them to

this mountainside in Galilee, demonstrating in Galilee of the Gentiles, this calling that will be for the church to take His good news, and make disciples of all people in all places.

And I am so thankful that I get to be a part of a church who embraces that, who throughout all of our history, has understood the scope of the calling of the gospel and has been a church committed not only to our city, but to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. About a week and a half ago, I just got back from Nepal. Some of you may not know that we have 40 Lincoln Berean staff members leading church planting movements all across the country of India, all across the country of Nepal, and in several other countries in Asia. And I just had the time to again coach our leaders, work with them, seek Christ with them, and God met us in a special way. And oh, I can't tell you the joy of seeing what God is doing through us on the other side of the world. Literally, some of the most unreached people and places on earth are hearing the good news, and disciples are being made. I got back, and last Sunday a group of us gathered together as a part of our training time for what's coming up in July, when twelve of us will go from here to the country of Bangladesh and we will walk into one of the world's most spiritually-needy nations. We will seek to bring hope and light and truth to the darkness, just as we read in Matthew 4 that Isaiah prophesied so long ago. I'm so thankful that that's a part of who we are as a church. But, I also want to be the first one to acknowledge that that perspective can sometimes lead us to a bit of a misunderstanding of the Great Commission, because absolutely the scope of the great commission is **to the ends of the earth.** It is **all people**, but it is about all of us, wherever God has us. In fact, in verse 19, when it says, **"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations,"** the ordering of the word there is actually: *as you go*, make disciples and what that means is that everyone who is a disciple, a follower of Christ, is given this unique privilege and opportunity, right where you are, to seek to be engaged in making disciples. As you go about your day, as you go to your workplace, as you go to your kids' school activities, as you go about your neighborhood, every one of us is called of God to be engaged in making disciples.

I've been in full-time ministry for 33 years, and over the course of those years, I can't count how many times I've been in conversation with groups of leaders or people where we're sitting together, and we're looking at the Scripture, and we're wrestling with and we're talking about the call of God for the church…the purpose of the church…and we're trying to come up with mission statements or vision statements. And Megan, a few minutes ago, well articulated our current version of our vision statement as a church: That we want to be *a people who come together, to know Jesus, to become like Him, and to help others do the same.* That's our current articulation of our calling as a church. But at the end of the day, I have never been in one of those conversations, never been in one when we didn't get down to the essence that the calling of the church is quite simple. No matter how you word it, it is to **make disciples…make disciples**! Most of you in this room know that; you understand it. And if I asked you, "What's the purpose of the church?" you'd say, in some form or some verbiage, something that said, in effect, "Make disciples"! I hear us talking about that in relationship to the church, but I don't very often hear believers talking about their own personal purpose as being "making disciples". What is God's calling for me...for you…for our lives as people individually and together? I don't often hear anyone saying, "Well, I am here on this earth, and I am right now seeking to make disciples." And I think part of that is because of some of the confusion about what *church* means in our culture.

You see, we have this thing in our minds where we think: this is church. In fact, probably many of you this morning, at some point said, "Yep, we're going to church this morning". But the reality is, if you think of what it was like back then and you stripped some things away, the church is not about this place. It's not about our programs; it's not about our events; it's not about a building. Imagine, for a moment, what it would be like to be on that hillside—just a group of people with Jesus, and here He is giving this mission. Now, imagine if we could, for a moment this morning, that we were to take away the sound system. What if, somehow, the screens disappeared? Maybe the chairs all suddenly disappeared? Maybe the building itself, maybe all of our buildings were gone? What if there was nothing here except for this being like we found it in 1979, a field? So what would be here? What would be here is the church…if you were here! See, if you strip away all these other things, *we are the church*! And we are no different and ought to be no different than those first disciples on that hillside listening to Jesus, as they're thinking and wondering, "Now what"? And He's saying, "Here's what: 'Make disciples'"! So, what does that mean? Well, thankfully, right here in this Great Commission, Jesus gives a couple of important descriptors of what that looks like. Let's look again at verse 19:

> **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit…**

So, something on the front end of the Great Commission involves **baptizing people** as followers of God. Next week, we're going to celebrate baptism, right here at Lincoln Berean. What a beautiful time! I think sometimes, though, we misunderstand what Jesus is teaching in Matthew 28, verse 19. I think sometimes we think: Well, I guess these are the words that we say for someone when we baptize them, and as they go under we say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." And we've got to say those right words, because that somehow, I guess, seals the deal or something. And we take that and make it into a ritual or a formula. But, that's not what Jesus was saying at all. What did he mean by saying *baptize them in-to the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?* Baptism is a place of public identification with Jesus, where a person stands up and says, "I'm with Him. I've given my heart to Him, my life to Him, and it is my desire to be His disciple, to be His follower".

One of the tragedies in the church is that we have a propensity, when we think about the scope of the Great Commission, to make the end of the church—converts, who profess Jesus and are baptized. We say, "Well, as long as we get more people who are praying to receive Jesus and being baptized, we're accomplishing the mission." That is not what it says! In one of my small groups, as we were meeting this weekend, one of the things we were reading asked a great question. It said, "Where in the teaching of Jesus, do you see Jesus present the gospel as the minimal entrance requirements to get into heaven?" Nowhere! Friends, nowhere is becoming a Christian and being baptized intended to be an end of the church. It's the beginning. It's the beginning of an interactive relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And therefore, the process of making disciples, is inviting people into the goodness and the fullness of God. It's beginning to demonstrate and to proclaim what it looks like *to follow Him, to walk with Him, to know Him, to seek Him, to serve Him, to love Him, to worship Him—all of the things that these first disciples were learning how to do.* That's the front end of what's involved in making disciples. And then he goes on in verse 20, to say also:

**…teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

Teaching them what? To observe, to obey, **to follow all that I commanded you**. There's a little bit of a challenge for our understanding in this part as well, because in our culture, in the way we were raised, we think of teaching as academic. We think of it as formal. That's our educational model, and so many of us think, "Okay, well, we've got to **teach them** to observe **all that I commanded you.**" That means Sunday morning messages. That means classes. That means another workshop where I'm getting more and more knowledge about God. And we think the way that I know whether or not I've got this is: I'll take some tests, and if I can give all the right answers to the doctrinal questions—all the right things—I can put that all down. I've got all the right beliefs. I guess now I am a fully formed disciple! And yet that's so different from how Jesus taught. If we were to try to think of what teaching looked like in the culture, in the context of Jesus Himself, the best word I can come up with is probably something like an apprenticeship. These people didn't go to a class that Jesus taught and write down notes of those things they had to memorize. They walked with Him; they ate with Him; they sat with Him; they laughed with Him; they slept near Him; they served alongside Him; they listened to Him; they took steps of faith, as He called them. They processed those back with Him—they lived in *interactive relationship*. For over three years they lived a *"With-Jesus Life,"* seeing how He lived, hearing what He taught, understanding that most of the life of Christ would be better *caught than taught.* That's the picture of discipleship. My favorite definition or explanation of what a disciple is, is that a disciple is *a learner* because the word disciple simply means a learner. So, *a disciple is a person who is learning how to routinely and easily do all that Jesus demonstrated and commanded.*

So, in every facet of my being, in every facet of my life, I'm trying to look at who Jesus was—the one person who lived out the fullness of humanity in all of its God-intended beauty, and I'm trying to align myself to living like He lived. In every thought, every word, every action, that I would increasingly, progressively be learning how to routinely and easily live like Jesus lived and do what Jesus said. So much so that, if Jesus were to live my life today, I would be living consistent with how He would live it if He was walking in my shoes. What a journey that "if". It would be a journey of *interactive relationship*. And I am so thankful for the privilege of continuing that interactive journey of learning with Jesus every day, for I have not arrived. But I get to walk with Him every day, and with one another, in a journey of learning how to routinely and easily become like Jesus, the greatest person who ever lived! That's the calling: **to go and make disciples**, *baptizing them, inviting them into an interactive relationship with God, and teaching them what it looks like to live with God and become like Jesus, which leaves us this morning with a very important question.*

**How are you personally and presently making disciples?** You, personally, presently, how are you engaged in helping make disciples? Now I know there are a lot of people in this room who are, and I thank God for that! I thank God for the many ways that you're walking alongside someone else, helping them to know the goodness of God, to see the goodness of God and learn how, themselves, to receive the goodness of God. But if, when I asked that question, your mind goes blank, I want to share just a couple of opportunities of some low-hanging fruit for you this morning. First of all, is what we've already been celebrating. It is Mother's Day and, "Happy Mother's Day," to the moms in the room. And this room is filled with moms and dads and grandmas

and grandpas and aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters. And every single one of you, as a disciple of Christ, has the opportunity and the privilege to begin making disciples right in the context of your family. How beautiful it was to see this stage filled with families and their prayer partners at today's child dedication. As we think about that journey, I can't watch the video with Gabrielle without just about losing it, because I have known that young lady since she was a tiny baby—and to see how many people gave themselves to being a part of the story of just one life! It is beautiful. You know, Megan's not in here anymore; she left. Why? Because she went straight down the hall to our kids' ministry, where there's a whole team of people right now seeking to make disciples, to sit across the table from a child, and to teach them about the love and the goodness of Jesus. Perhaps others in this room could be engaged by helping with our kids' ministry, or maybe you'd like to skip next door to our youth complex and help make disciples of our students. Maybe for you, it's more in the adult context, and you could be one of what we need in the future of an increasing number of Life Group leaders, building into the life of a group of adults in this church. There are so many ways and so many opportunities right within the walls of this building. But we also know the context extends right out onto the street, as I said, where you work, the sports and the activities with your kids or your grandkids, or right in your neighborhood.

We wanted to have a chance to reflect on that and think about that together. So, we're doing something a little bit different this week. Instead of our Life Groups gathering as they usually do in a living room, answering questions, having conversation, and thinking about how we become more like Christ—which is great by the way—but this week our Life Groups are going outside. And we are inviting all of our Life Groups to pick one neighborhood of one person in their Life Group and go out and just quietly walk and pray for their neighbors, just to be reminded that people matter to God, and they are all around us. And so many people are struggling silently through life without God and without hope. We have received the greatest gift, the greatest news the world has ever known of the goodness of God, and we are invited by God Himself, to share that with the people around us. In one of my Life Groups, we got a jump on this deal; we did it last Sunday. And I can't tell you what a joy it was to go into the neighborhood of Caleb and Joy, who are sitting right up over there, and we had the opportunity to pray for their neighbors. And it was so encouraging to see how Caleb and Joy are already engaged in seeking to make disciples, not only in this building like they do in so many ways, but right there in their neighborhood. Joy had a map for us of all of their neighbors, with information about all of them. Why? Because she knows them. And she had emailed, asking for prayer requests from neighbors, and they sent many prayer requests that we were able to walk around and pray for. And people literally stopped us and thanked us for praying for them. It was beautiful. It's a beautiful picture of how we get to be the church engaged right in our neighborhood, making disciples. And so we invite you to be a part of that as a Life Group or as a family, to take some step, to step out in such a way. All of which leads to a final question I have for us this morning.

**Why is it we don't make disciples? Why do we hesitate? Why do we shrink back?** I think there are three things that come out clearly in the text itself. The first is just what we've been talking about. I think we fail to remember and realize our *purpose*. I've been in ministry for a long time, but I'm going to be honest. I don't get up every day and remember all throughout the day that I am here to make disciples, I get distracted by a lot of other things. Maybe you do, as well. And we need to be regularly reminded that, at the end of the day, before His ascension, Jesus made it simple and clear. "*I've got one command for you and that is, as a follower of Christ, make disciples. Be a*

*disciple who helps make disciples."* I love our vision statement: I love that we want to be *a people who come together.* This is not a Lone-Ranger journey. I love that we come together *to know God,* not just know about Him, but to really genuinely know Him and live in interactive relationship. And I'm so thankful how so many of us are seeking *to become like Him,* to actually be more like Jesus, experiencing total life transformation. But, friends, we're missing the joy of what God has for us, if we forget the last part, *helping others do the same*. There's perhaps no greater privilege in life than to bring hope, and to bring love, and to bring the goodness of God to those who are without God, and without hope. We forget our *purpose*.

I think a second reason right here in verse 18, is we forget His *power*. How did Jesus introduce the Great Commission? What did He say before He gave the command? He said, **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."** Make no mistake. The risen Jesus is King. He is the reigning King, and Father God is mediating through Him **all authority in heaven and on earth.** He is the King of kings, and we get to be a part of building His kingdom. His kingdom is simply that place, those places, where what God wants done, is done. Hopefully, we are seeking to present our lives, voluntarily surrendering our kingdoms, not building our own kingdoms, but seeking to build His kingdom in our lives. What He wants done, is being done, and then through our lives, helping to extend that kingdom to other people, to experience the goodness of God.

But I think a lot of Christians in our current culture are living afraid. I think we see the world changing so rapidly, and much of what we hold dear being rejected by the culture in which we live. And I see two typical responses taking place. One is a response of passivity. Well, "I'm not going to get into that mess. I mean, I'm just going to put my head down and kind of keep to myself and live what I believe and not share it with anybody else. Or even, maybe just go along and accept whatever is happening in our culture, but I'm going to be pretty passive in this whole thing." I see others who are extremely engaged, but they're angry in their engagement. They're so hurt and so angry about how the things that have been near and dear to them for so many years are being pulled right out from under our feet, and they're ready to fight anybody tooth and nail who opposes them and disagrees with them. I think there's a better way. I think God calls us to be people filled with love and grace, who understand, "Yes, there's darkness, but we bring light, not heat. We bring truth. We bring love. We bring hope. We bring joy as people who are engaged." Christians ought to be the most confident people in all of the world.

We have Philippians 2: We know that, at the end, **every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God, the Father.** There ought to be no more confident people in all the world than the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, as we seek to love Him and love others in His name. So, we forget our *purpose*; we forget His *power*, and then there's a third, maybe even most important thing. We forget His *presence*. And that's why Jesus ends with this, and Matthew ends his Gospel with these words:

> **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** (Vs. 19-20)

The Great Commission is all encompassing. There are four "All's" in this commission: *All* authority, *All* the nations, *All* that I have commanded you, and in the original language, *All* of the

days I am with you. All! All! All! All! And Jesus wants to make it crystal clear to us, He is with us.

Two theologians were debating this last part of chapter 28, and one said, "This is one of the greatest promises in the Bible." The other one said, "No, it's not. It's not a promise. It's a statement of fact. Jesus didn't promise, 'I will be with you.' Jesus simply said, 'I am with you, always.'" My friends, there is absolutely never a moment if you're a follower of Christ, that He is not with you. Never! He is with you in the good times, in the bad times, in the hard times, and in the joyful times. He is with you, and He will be with you as you seek to increasingly learn how to live routinely and easily as He did…and as you help others do the same. One of the worst things that we can think to do is that we somehow hear things at church, and now, "I'm going to go out there and do something *for* God." That's not God's desire or His design. He wants us to go out there and, "Do something *with* God," but even more, something that, "He will do *through* us." You're not on your own, given some task or calling that you can't accomplish. I can't preach apart from Him being with me. He is the One who enables us to become the kind of people He wants us to be…and to help others to do the same. This, my friends, is the Great Commission. It's the marching order of the Church: to share the Good News and make disciples near and far.

So, I wonder when I think about my grandson, Ollie, "Am I a weirdo for telling people about him? Am I somehow offensive for sharing the good news, the great news of the blessing that he has been in our lives?" I don't think so. That's just what we do as human beings. After all, there's a reason it's called good news…great news! News is something to be shared. But I've got to be honest. Ollie, in his first year, is only the second greatest thing that happened to me this year. The greatest, without a doubt, above and beyond all else, is the goodness of God. My God has been with me every moment through thick and thin, through the really hard times, through the really good times. There's never been a moment where my God and His goodness have not been with me. He has encouraged me. He has loved me. He has forgiven me. He has provided for me. He has protected me. He is with me and that is the best news—the greatest thing that could possibly happen to me. Am I a weirdo to want others to experience His goodness and His love, to share about the great news of a God who meets us and cares for us like that? I don't think so. I hope you don't either.

*Jesus, thank You so much for being a God, because of what You did there and then, who changes everything here and now. God, help us to understand this joyful opportunity to become disciples increasingly like You but also help others do the same. Keep us from the lie that we are somehow offensive, that it's inappropriate. Lord, how do we keep Your goodness to ourselves? Use us, God to share it with others for Your glory and their good. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988, 1995
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2023 – Jeff Petersen. All rights reserved.

lincoln berean

SPRING 2023 // WEEK 5

Life Group Questions

Here and Now // May 13-14, 2023

The Resurrected Jesus and Our Mission // Matthew 28:16-20

## Serve Day – Prayer Walk

As part of our church-wide Serve Day for this year, this is the week we step out of our comfort zones and go for a prayer walk together. Praying for others is a good way to serve them well. A prayer walk with others may feel a little awkward or strange at times, just remember, that is normal when we are trying something new that is out of a comfort zone. The questions below are formatted a bit differently this week. There are a few questions about the passage and sermon as well as some questions to help us reflect on and debrief our prayer walk experience. The passage is included below since it is rather short this week. There is also a Prayer Walk Helps Section included below.

The suggested flow for the night is:

Read the passage.
Go on the prayer walk.
Discuss & reflect on your experience.
Discuss the questions about the passage/sermon.
Close in Prayer.

## Introduction

As we switch to the gospel according to Matthew this week, we are looking at what is referred to as the Great Commission. The eleven disciples proceed to Galilee as Jesus has commanded them and Matthew records Jesus appearing to them there and gives them their marching orders.

## Getting Started

1. Take a few minutes to get organized as a group or multiple groups if you are splitting into smaller groups.

2. Find the lists you made of your neighbors or use the Prayer Helps Section below to make a list.

3. Remember, there is no pressure to perform on this Prayer Walk. If you don't feel like praying out loud, you can pray in your heart and participate in prayer as others pray.

4. Remember, Jesus is walking with you through the Holy Spirit just as he promised in our passage for this week.

**5. Choose someone to read the passage (Matt. 28:16-20) aloud for the group as a way of sending you out.**

---

**Matt. 28:16-20 (NASB)**

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of

all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

## Prayer Walk Helps

1) Make a simple list of those in your circle of influence.
   (Family, neighbors, those you work with, those you see on a regular basis)

2) What do you know about these people that could guide you in your prayers for them?

3) Consider praying simple sentence prayers like those listed below for those on your list.
   - "Help _____ to see you, Lord."
   - "Lord, give _____ comfort in their time of need."
   - "Holy Spirit, reveal the beauty of Jesus to _____."
   - "Father, orchestrate circumstances in _____'s life so they realize their need for you.

4) Here are simple sentence prayers you can pray for yourself as you consider caring for your neighbors.
   - "Lord, reveal to me what you are doing in _____'s life."
   - "Father, give me opportunities to serve _____."
   - "Holy Spirit, reveal to me how to best love _____."
   - "Father, allow me to have a chance to have a conversation with _____ this week."

## Reflection & Discussion Questions

A few reflection questions on your experience with the Prayer Walk: (you don't have to discuss every question)

1) Keeping in mind that anytime we try something new it can feel strange or cause us to feel out of place. What was this experience like for you?

   What was hard/what did you enjoy about this experience?

   What was something unexpected that you experienced during the Prayer Walk?

   What felt significant to you during this experience?

2) What (if anything) did you hear Jesus saying through the Holy Spirit during the Prayer Walk? Did any scripture come to mind during the Prayer Walk?

3) Read our passage (**Matt. 28:16-20**) for tonight again. **Does anything stick out from the passage? Or what has stuck with you from Pastor Jeff's sermon this past weekend?**

4) Jesus states, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." How does this statement change the way you think about your experience on the Prayer Walk or your thoughts about those you prayed for tonight?

   How should our belief in this statement change our thoughts and actions about making disciples?

5) What would it look like for you to move forward from this night with a focus in your life on making disciples?

## Prayer

Consider closing your time tonight with the following prayer that aligns us with God's heart and passion.

Lord Jesus, you stretched out your arms of love upon the hardwood of the cross
that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace.
So clothe us in your spirit, that we, reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and experience of your love;
for the honor of your name and the good of all people. Amen.

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.

Prayer Focus: As you pray this week consider adding this simple sentence prayer to your routine. "Lord Jesus, please bring someone into my life or across my path today that I can influence for you." Consider putting an alarm on your phone to go off twice during your day so you can return to this prayer for a few minutes.

Scripture Focus: Before we can make disciples of Jesus, we must make sure we are following Jesus and living as a disciple. Read Luke 14:25-35 and reflect on Jesus' call to discipleship. What do you hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you about as you meditate on these verses?