

**The Great Commission**  
**Matthew 28:18-20**

Friends, it was sometime on Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year when the command came down from their commander-in-chief – the President of the United States, and the men of SEAL Team Six were given orders to go and rescue two Aid-workers who were being held hostages held by pirates near Adado, Somalia.

And two days later on Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup> we heard the news that SEAL Team Six had successfully carried out their mission and rescued the hostages and we watched video footage of President Obama making a phone to tell the father of one of the Aid workers that his daughter was ok!

But can you imagine the scenario playing out differently where the officer in charge of SEAL Team Six walks into the soldiers lounge area and says Men – you’ve got orders from the President to go on a mission and the marines look at each other and say “nah... don’t feel like doing it- but thanks anyways...”

Or if SEAL Team Six started their mission and parachuted into the pirates’ territory, stormed their headquarters but then quit the mission because the leader of the pirates came out and yelled at them and told them to stop it.

Those are ridiculous scenarios aren’t they? That just wouldn’t happen would it?

Soldiers *obey* when their commanding officer tells them to do something, don’t they, and they don’t stop until they complete the mission.

And friends, this morning we heard our commanding officer give us our mission orders – the Risen Lord Jesus Christ says to us “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

And if emphasizing the fact that Jesus is our commanding officer seems a bit authoritarian to us, perhaps it may be better to call Jesus our Captain – since a Captain not only has the rank and authority needed to command our obedience...

He also has demonstrated the character and the courage needed to win our allegiance

Jesus' command to us to "make disciples" comes after we've seen him minister to the poor and needy, heal the sick, cast out demons, stand up to legalistic Pharisees, and lay down his life – on a cross - for the sins of the world.

Friends Jesus has earned the right to command us and to call us to continue the mission which God gave to Him – the task of "Making Disciples"

And so as we hear this passage of scripture read to us this morning we need to hear this as our marching orders from our Captain – The Risen Lord Jesus Christ who has been given all authority, and who has won our hearts.

And its not for us to say – make disciples, nah I don't really want to... or that we start this mission but give up because the people we are to disciple tell us they are not interested.

This is not Mission Impossible where it's our mission "should we choose to accept it" and the message will self-destruct in 30 seconds.

The only question is if we **are going to be obedient or disobedient** – friends Jesus words still stand. Orders are orders. And since we are going to be obedient to them... we need to know the details of what is involved in discipling others.

So let's look at who is to be the focus of our mission, Jesus directs us to make **disciples of all nations**.

Now if you look around in our church, you can see the evidence, the fruit... that previous generations of Christians have been obedient to Christ's command to disciple ***all nations***.

People from many nations and ethnic backgrounds are part of Christ's body here at Valleyview – as a result of being discipled. People from Africa, from Vietnam, from Korea, from the United States, from the Caribbean and from Russia... did I miss anyone?

And we have the opportunity to continue to bear fruit in this way, because people from nations all over the world are moving to Calgary, God is literally handing us the opportunity to continue to make disciples of all nations.

And in addition to help us recognize the amazing opportunity that we have, Jesus' command also strengthens our resolve to carry out this mission in spite of the opposition that we face from those who believe in religious pluralism and cultural autonomy.

Our call to “disciple all nations” is not an expression of cultural superiority – as the pluralists and the cultural autonomists believe – but in fact it shows a high regard and respect for different cultures, it says that they are worth saving.

Because friends the bible reveals to us that when Christ returns to make a new heavens and a new earth and establishes the City of God <sup>26</sup> *The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.* <sup>27</sup> *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful.” (Rev 21)*

The glory and honor of the nations is their different cultures – but only cultures that have been disciplined, where Christ has removed what is impure and shameful, are going to be a part of the new heavens the new earth.

God loves the cultural diversity He created in this world and the call to disciple all nations is his promise that a redeemed cultural diversity will always be a part of his Kingdom.

And the means to discipling cultures is of course discipling the people in those cultures and that involves **going, baptizing and teaching.**

Now if you've been a Christian for a while you may have heard about or met a missionary - someone who has learned another language and culture and traveled to other country so they can share the gospel with people who have not yet heard about it. Some of you may have even done that.

And Jesus' instruction to “go” in this passage certainly means that we should do this. In fact I believe that some of you who are in our church right now have been sent here by God from

whichever country was home for you in order to “disciple” the nations who live here in the communities here on the Westside of Calgary.

But the grammar of this instruction is deliberately ambiguous – and it can also mean “as you are going about...disciple!” In other words as you are going about your day to day activities... take the opportunities given to you to disciple people.

But this doesn’t mean that “discipling” is something you are to do all by yourself – that you are to single-handedly make disciples of all your neighbors and friends and colleagues.

Friends “Discipling” is a team sport! Jesus gives these instructions to his disciples as a group, and it is as a group, as a team.... that we undertake this mission.

And we all have a part to play in it – according to our spiritual gifts, that’s why it is very important that you know what your spiritual gifts are – not just your natural talents and abilities but your spiritual gifts.

And if you are a disciple of Jesus you have at least one of these – most likely more than one.

Preaching,	Teaching the Faith,	Encouragement
Generosity	Leadership	Mercy
Wisdom	Knowing	Faith
Healing	Miracles	Discernment
Apostleship	Evangelism	Shepherding
Tongues	Interpretation of Tongues	
Helping = doing specific acts of Charity		
Servanthood = ministry for others,		
Visionary and Managing Leadership		

And these are gifts from God the Father, given to us out of the grace of Jesus Christ, and we use them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, I believe this is what it means to “Baptize” people into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Literally the word “Baptize” means to immerse, and so our entire team – all of us – needs to work together to “immerse”

somebody in what God has given us in the grace of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So the team member who has the gift of Helps might create an opportunity for our church to disciple someone by getting some of us together to help a neighbor move.

Then someone who has the gift of Evangelism might build a relationship with that person and invite them to visit a worship service where those using their talents of music and hospitality through the spiritual gift of Servanthood provide a warm welcoming engaging experience.

And those who have the gift of Preaching and Teaching the Faith share the gospel with them, someone who has the gift of Shepherding or Nurturing Leadership helps this person to grow in their faith, and someone with the gift of generosity helps to fund all this work....

They are “immersed” into the work of the Trinity in our lives and through us God works to make his grace and forgiveness and new life a reality in theirs – and to recognize and proclaim

this reality in their life we give the sacrament of baptism to them, and to their children.

You see this is what happened with the disciples on the day of Pentecost – using the spiritual gifts which they had just received when the Holy Spirit was poured out - the gift of tongues, preaching and evangelism

– they immersed many people from the different nations who were gathered in Jerusalem in the message of the gospel and many of them believed!

So Peter said to them...*"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."* (Acts 2: 38-39)

Go make disciples of all nations... baptizing them into the name of the Father, into the Son and into the Holy Spirit...

And *teaching* them to obey everything I commanded you

Again friends it takes all of us – the whole team - to do the teaching, not just the person with the gift of “Teaching the Faith.” Because we’re not just teaching to pass on information – **we’re teaching in order to achieve *obedience*** to Jesus commands.

Our goal is help people become disciples who *obey* Jesus, not just know about him, or even believe in him – but *obey Him...*

And the most effective way to teach obedience to all of Jesus’ commands is for us to model it as we work together going about our daily lives in our obedience to His final command to “make disciples.”

In fact friends, I believe that Jesus is saying **in order to come** full circle as a disciple you need to model obedience by intentionally using your gifts to participate in “baptizing” and “teaching” all nations.

So what does this mean for us?

Maybe for some of us this means simply realizing that our current participation in ministry is working towards making disciples – be blessed good and faithful servants!

Maybe we’ve just been ministering simply because it’s a good thing to do and we enjoy it, but now we realize we’re being obedient to Christ and it’s changing people’s lives!

Friends – becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ is the best thing that can happen to anyone!

You are freed from the guilt of what you’ve done wrong in life, You are given power to do what is right, you have meaning and purpose, and you have a relationship with God.

And He promises to work through whatever you go through in this life, and give you whatever you need to become a new person that will spend eternity in the new heavens and the new earth. Amen!?

But perhaps this morning we might be hearing Jesus challenging us about our obedience to this command to make

disciples and for one reason or another you've been resisting him.

Working together with your fellow Christians as a Team towards helping people become disciples is an amazing experience, if you are not part of that - **you truly are missing out!**

And so to help you understand what you receive from participating in making disciples and motivate you to move past whatever might be holding you back from that....

I would like to ask Amoriza to come and share how she and I were so blessed to participate in what Operation Christmas Child is doing in Uruguay.