

**The Great Commission 2016**  
**Matthew 28:18-20**

Friends, it was sometime on Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2012 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 suddenly they just 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 and Ascended 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 and generosity needed to win our allegiance and obedience.

Jesus' command to "make disciples" comes from one who himself has done this by ministering to the poor and needy, healing the sick, casting out demons, standing up to legalistic Pharisees, and laying down his life – on a cross - for the sins of the world.

Brothers and sisters – not only does Jesus have the right as the Son of God to command us and to call us to continue the mission which God gave to Him – the task of "Making Disciples" he has demonstrated he is worthy of that right in his life and ministry.

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 and Ascended Lord Jesus Christ who has been given all authority, who has won our hearts, and filled us with His Holy Spirit to empower us for this mission.

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 or that the message of Jesus Christ offends them.

This is not Mission Impossible where this becomes our mission "should we choose to accept it..."

The only question is if we are going to be obedient or disobedient – friends Jesus words still stand. Orders are orders.

And since we have been filled with the Holy Spirit – since we have been "Pleroo-d" and "Pletho-d", I don't think there is any question that we going to be obedient to our Lord's Commands... we just need to know the details of what is involved in discipling others.

So let's look at some of those details.

So who is to be the focus of our mission?

Well Jesus directs us to make disciples of all nations. And 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 disciplined. 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... including Canadians who've lived here for a while, and the First Nations who were the indigenous people of this land.

But, we need to acknowledge this mission will face opposition as there are many who would accuse Christians of promoting cultural superiority and who would insist that all religions lead to God – so there is no need for making disciples of all nations.

However, as we noted a couple weeks ago as we celebrated Jesus' Ascension, and as Jesus' himself claims in this passage – ALL authority on heaven and earth has been given to Him.

Which means that Christ has more authority than Buddha, Mohammed, Gandhi, or any other religious tradition, or government, or law, or social construct that people might believe in – no matter how loving, peaceful, or moral those things might be.

And brothers and sisters in Christ, it's also helpful to understand that our mission to "disciple all nations" is not an expression of cultural superiority – as the religious pluralists and the cultural autonomists, and unfortunately sometimes Western Christians mistakenly believe – but rather it shows a

high regard and respect for different cultures, Jesus proclaims that they are worth saving.

Because friends the bible reveals to us in Rev 21:26-27 that when Christ returns to make the New Heavens and Earth and establishes the City of God in them, that *“The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful.”*

Friends, the glory and honor of the nations are their different cultures and this is what will be offered in worship in the Heavenly City.

But it will only be the cultures of the nations which 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.

So you begin to see some of the importance of the mission from this perspective as well.

Brother and Sisters in Christ, 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 redeem the cultures of different nations is of course through discipling the people in those cultures by 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 how we have been filled with the Holy Spirit’s power and how it empowers us with spiritual gifts.

That’s why it is very important that you know what your spiritual gifts are – not just your “green creational talents and abilities” but also your “blue spiritual gifts.”

And as disciples of Jesus we have been filled with the Holy Spirit to have faith and bear fruit, and we are also filled, and can and should ask to be refilled for empowerment for ministry with whatever gifts are needed.

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

These expressions of being filled with “pletho-d” with the Holy Spirit are gifts from God the Father, given to us out of the

grace of Jesus Christ, and we use them for going out to make disciples of ALL nations.

And Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this communal, group and team aspect of discipling helps us to understand the fullness of what it means to “Baptize” people into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Because the word “Baptize” literally 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 water 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 all of Jesus' commands.

Our goal is help people become disciples who **obey** Jesus, not just know about him, or even believe in him – but who **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 obedience, to His final command to us to go and "make disciples."

So friends this morning we have reached the focal point of what Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension, and Pentecost are all working towards – Christ's Great Commission to us to Go and make disciples of all nations.

And a good question to ask ourselves is "where are we in the discipleship circle?"

There are three of us this morning who know for sure that they have stepped into leadership positions within that

discipleship circle – and they have a responsibility to see that it continues to function properly in a God-honoring way.

But where are the rest of us?

Are we just joining that circle here at Valleyview? Just checking it out, learning and being taught to obey ALL that Jesus commanded?

Or have we grown in our obedience to what Jesus commanded so that we are now beginning to participate in helping Team Valleyview with the teaching as we serve in one of the ministries here?

Teaching Kidz Zone, 1014, Christ Care Groups, Hospitality, worship teams and so on...

Or has that word “Go” started to bother us a bit, so that we feel the need to reach out into our surrounding community to connect with people who are not yet connected with us – and draw them into, “baptize” them into the circle of discipleship?

So where are you in the circle of discipleship and are you progressing step by step towards coming full circle?

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!?

If you’ve experienced this, or are experiencing this – then imagine how amazing it is to see this happen in the lives of other people – because you are being obedient to our Lord’s Great commission!

So Valleyview, Go! And make disciples of All nations! Amen.