

The Triune God draws near in love, then sends ordinary disciples with an extraordinary promise, “I am with you.” In Matthew 28:16–20, Jesus meets His disciples after the resurrection. They worship Him, but some still doubt. He does not reject them for being unfinished. He comes near, declares His authority, and sends them into the world to make disciples. The mission of the Church does not rest on perfect confidence, perfect people, or perfect circumstances. It rests on the risen Christ, who sends His people and stays with them.

Big Idea

Jesus does not wait until His disciples are strong, certain, or fully prepared before He sends them. He meets them in worship and hesitation, claims all authority in heaven and on earth, and gives them the mission of making disciples. We are sent by Christ, sustained by Christ, and never abandoned by Christ.

What the Passage Shows Us

Matthew 28:16–20 is the final scene of Matthew’s Gospel. Jesus has been crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. The women have seen Him and carried His message to the disciples. Now the eleven go to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go.

That one word, “eleven,” says more than we may notice at first. There used to be twelve. Judas is gone. Peter has denied Jesus. The others have scattered. This is not a flawless group of spiritual heroes ready to take over the world. This is a wounded group of ordinary people trying to obey the risen Lord.

Matthew tells us they worshiped Jesus, but some doubted. That is honest, and it is good news. Faith and hesitation can stand in the same heart. Worship and questions can show up in the same room. Jesus does not wait for perfect faith before He gives holy work. He comes near to people whose hearts are still catching up with resurrection.

Then Jesus speaks of authority. All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him. The One who was crucified now stands risen. The One who was rejected now reigns. The mission that follows does not begin with the disciples’ strength. It begins with Christ’s lordship.

God Comes Near Before He Sends

Before Jesus sends the disciples, He comes to them. That order matters. He does not shout instructions from a distance. He draws near.

That is the heart of the gospel. God does not love us from far away. The Father sends the Son. The Son enters our flesh, our grief, our sin-scarred world. The Spirit gives life, courage, and power to people who could never carry the mission alone.

Matthew begins by telling us Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Matthew ends with Jesus promising that He will be with His people always. The whole Gospel is held together by the presence of God in Christ.

God with us becomes God sending us. God sending us remains God with us.

Ordinary Disciples, Extraordinary Promise

The disciples are ordinary people. They have already misunderstood Jesus more than once. They have argued, feared, overpromised, and run. Still, Jesus entrusts them with the mission of the Church.

That should encourage us. Jesus is not looking for people who have never failed. He is not looking for people who have every answer. He is not looking for people whose faith never trembles. He calls ordinary disciples and gives them an extraordinary promise.

“I am with you always.”

That promise does not mean the mission will be easy. It does not mean people will always listen. It does not mean the Church will never struggle. It means Christ’s presence will not leave us when obedience gets hard.

Making Disciples

Jesus sends His followers to make disciples of all nations. He does not say, “Go stay busy.” He does not say, “Go maintain what feels familiar.” He does not say, “Go build a religious club.” He says to make disciples.

That is slower work than we sometimes want. Making disciples takes patience. It takes relationship. It takes Scripture, prayer, worship, teaching, correction, mercy, forgiveness, and time. It means helping people follow Jesus until His love begins to shape their choices, words, relationships, homes, habits, and hopes.

The Church can do many good things. We can hold meetings, plan events, keep calendars full, care for buildings, and preserve traditions. Those things can serve the mission, but they cannot replace the mission. The mission is people becoming followers of Jesus Christ.

Jesus says this mission is for all nations. That word “all” pushes us beyond our comfort zones. The gospel is not only for people who already know how to act in church. It is not only for one family, one culture, one town, one race, one background, or one kind of personality. The grace of Jesus Christ reaches across every boundary we are tempted to draw.

Teaching Obedience

Jesus also tells His disciples to teach others to obey what He commanded. Obedience can sound heavy if we hear it apart from grace. But Jesus is not calling us into cold rule-keeping. He is calling us into a life shaped by His way.

In Matthew, that includes mercy, forgiveness, prayer, humility, truthfulness, enemy love, care for the least, and trust in God. Obedience is not a cage. It is the shape grace takes in a life surrendered to Christ.

Discipleship is not just knowing more about Jesus. It is learning to live more like Jesus.

What This Means for Us

Many of us know what it feels like to worship while still carrying questions. We show up, but we are tired. We pray, but we are uncertain. We believe, but part of us still trembles. Matthew 28 reminds us that Jesus meets people there.

The call of Christ does not begin after all our fear disappears. It begins when Jesus draws near and says, “Go.” We do not have to be impressive. We have to be faithful. We do not have to carry the mission in our own strength. We have to trust the One who sends us.

This passage also calls the Church back to its center. Our purpose is not survival for survival’s sake. Our purpose is not comfort. Our purpose is not simply keeping things the way they have always been. Our purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

That begins close to home. It begins in our conversations, our families, our church, our community, and the ordinary places where God has already placed us. It begins when we invite, teach, listen, serve, forgive, pray, and love in the name of Jesus.

And when the mission feels too large, we remember the promise. Christ is with us. Always.

Key Truths

Jesus sends imperfect disciples.

Worship and doubt can exist in the same heart.

The mission of the Church rests on Christ’s authority, not human confidence.

The Church is called to make disciples, not just maintain activity.

The gospel is for all nations and all people.

Baptism marks people as belonging to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Teaching obedience means helping people live the way of Jesus.

Discipleship is slow, patient, grace-shaped work.

Christ does not send His people alone.

The risen Jesus is with us always.

Questions for Reflection

Where do I see myself in the disciples, worshiping but still unsure?

What fears keep me from joining Christ’s mission more fully?

How can our church focus more clearly on making disciples?

Who around me needs to hear or see the grace of Jesus this week?

What does it mean for me to live as someone sent by Christ?

How does Jesus’ promise, “I am with you always,” change the way I face hard things?

What is one faithful step I can take this week?

Takeaway

Matthew 28:16–20 shows us the heart of the risen Christ. He meets ordinary disciples with grace, speaks with all authority, and sends them into the world with a mission bigger than they can carry alone. But He does not send them alone. The God who comes near in love also sends in mercy, and the One who sends promises to stay. We go because Christ is risen. We keep going because Christ is with us.

Key Verse

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:20