

The Great Commission

by Mack Tomlinson

The Great Commission is a command from Jesus to His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 44:51

Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Mark 16:20, Luke 24:47-49, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Evangelism", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the Great Commission as recorded in Mark 16, Matthew 28, Luke 24, and Acts 1, emphasizing the call for all believers to be witnesses and share the gospel to all nations. It highlights the importance of being empowered by the Holy Spirit for effective evangelism and the need for obedience in carrying out the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with boldness.

Transcript

Mark chapter 16 and Matthew 28, Mark 16, two verses from Mark 16, verses 15 and 20. Now remember we've covered up to 14, verse 14, and then we skip to 16 through 19. So we will now cover Mark's gospel account of the Great Commission as written by one of the copyists in the manuscript from Mark's gospel, Mark 16, 15 and 20.

And he said to them, go into all the world and preach or proclaim the gospel to every creature or to the whole creation, verse 20. And they went out and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs. Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20.

And Jesus came and said to them, all authority or all power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Luke 24 and Acts chapter 1 also include accounts of statements about the Great Commission. And we began Mark's gospel seven years ago. Some of you weren't here.

And the beginning of Mark chapter 1 says the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And here we are at the end of Mark's account of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we have had a glorious

snapshot, if you will, a wonderful survey, a synopsis, a summary of the life and ministry of our Lord here as written by Mark.

And so today, from incarnation to proclamation, the Great Commission. The Great Commission is about proclaiming by the church for all ages to every nation. The incarnation to the ascension proclaiming the glorious gospel of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So what I want to do today is not only to focus on the Great Commission, but for us to remind ourselves of the content of Mark's gospel quickly. You don't need to turn to these chapters. But think with me, because think of these snapshots that we have seen.

As we have studied through Mark, we've only really touched the hem of the garment. We've only gotten glimpses of what is truly here. So what was in Mark? Chapter 1, the ministry, it opens with the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism and temptations in the wilderness.

And then Jesus began His public ministry and His calling of the disciples as apostles. And chapter 1 ends with the launching of Jesus' public preaching and teaching and healing ministry. Chapter 2, Jesus' healing and teaching.

Chapter 3, great crowds begin to gather. And He appoints the twelve apostles. And He begins to warn, even early on, He warns the scribes there in chapter 2 or 3 about the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit.

And then it's at the end of chapter 2 that His mother and brothers and sisters come to try to get Him. And the disciples say, Lord, Your mother and brothers are here. And what does Jesus say? Who are my mothers? Who is my mother and brothers? And He says, Behold, those who do the will of God, those are my mother and my brothers and sisters.

Chapter 4, the Lord begins to teach in parables. And that chapter tells us the purpose of the parables was to hide truth from some people and to reveal truth to others. Chapter 5, healings.

The Gadarene demoniac. The woman with the issue of her blood hemorrhaging for twelve years. Jairus' dead daughter raised from the dead back to life.

Chapter 6, His rejection in His hometown of Nazareth. Ascending out of the twelve for the first time officially. The death of John the Baptist and the feeding of 5,000.

And right after that, Jesus walks on the water. Chapter 7, teaching and healing, teaching and healing. He continues to unfold His ministry.

Chapter 8, the second large feeding of 4,000 people. He then deals with the Pharisees. Healing of a blind man.

Peter's confession of Christ. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And in chapter 8, Jesus begins to tell them progressively at times of His soon to come suffering and death.

Chapter 9, He's transfigured before them on the Mount of Transfiguration and He continues to teach. Chapter 10, teaching continued and the healing of blind Bartimaeus. Chapter 11, His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the Passion Week starts.

He curses the fig tree, the final cleansing of the temple. He ends Jewish worship there and His authority is challenged. Chapter 12, parables, parables.

And teaching about paying taxes to Caesar. Chapter 13 is eschatological. Eschatology teaching on the end times and what's going to happen in the second coming.

Chapter 14, Jesus is anointed at the supper by a woman with a costly ointment anointed for His burial. In 14, He's betrayed by Judas. He has the Passover with the disciples.

He institutes the Lord's Supper. He goes into Gethsemane. He's arrested in trial before the Sanhedrin and Peter's denial of the Lord three times.

Chapter 15, He's delivered to Pilate. He's delivered to be crucified and His death and burial. Chapter 16, Christ the Lord is risen today.

His resurrection. His ascension to heaven. His enthronement in heaven.

That is Mark's Gospel. Now, what I want to give you is, think of this, if you could write this down. Do it or listen later.

But there's a chronological, theological survey if you follow any of the Gospels. Not just Mark's, but Matthew, Luke, John. There's a chronological, theological development of all the themes in the Gospels.

Think of this. They all start one way or the other. Incarnation.

The coming of Jesus Christ. Incarnation. Identification.

He's one of us. He becomes one of us. Incarnation.

Identification. Revelation. Why? Because He perfectly brings truth.

He perfectly reveals the Father. And He progressively reveals His own identity and who He is. Incarnation.

Identification. Revelation. Inspiration.

No man spoke like this man. His example. His words.

Universal. Permanent. Inspiration to the church.

Condemnation. He comes and He condemns false teaching. He condemns temple Judaism at the end because it had run its day.

It was over. Now the real Lamb of God is here to be sacrificed. So He ends and condemns temple Judaism.

Propitiation and reconciliation at the cross occurs. He propitiates the wrath of God in behalf of all who will believe on Him. He reconciles us to God by His death once and forever.

Resurrection. Ascension. Empowering impartation as He pours out the Holy Spirit.

Transformation. Commission. And proclamation.

That is the theological, chronological survey of every one of the Gospels from beginning to the end. I want you to turn back to Matthew where we read Matthew 28 because we're going to think today about our Lord's commissioning of the church. The apostles, the early church in Jerusalem, the church through all the ages and us.

We are as much commissioned with this Gospel as anyone ever has been. This message of the Gospel has been given to you and I for us to be something with it and to do something with it. Matthew 28, 18-20.

Notice. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore.

Because this is true, therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I've commanded you. And behold, I am with you always. Matthew's account is this.

Christ's authority is declared and is the source of everything now that we're to do. His authority, we have the full authority of heaven behind us and His empowering presence with us to be engaged in the great commission. Matthew here, Jesus gives four commands and I want you just to see them in those verses.

First of all, verse 19, Go! Go! Go! Number two, make disciples. Number three, baptize. Number four, teach them.

Four commands that should always be included in the churches carrying out the great commission. Go! Go! Well, you can't teach baptized disciples until you go and make disciples. So we must go.

We must make disciples. We must baptize them and we must teach them. There is no such thing in the New Testament as an unbaptized disciple.

Are you one who is now a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ and you've not been baptized? Four commands and one promise. Notice the promise. Verse 20, Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

His empowering presence is promise. There. Four commands, one marvelous promise.

That's Matthew's summary of the great commission. Now turn back to Mark 16. Mark 16.

The copyist who added verses 9-20 to Mark's gospel included two simple statements which we read. Verse 15, verse 20, both of which are biblical truth. Verse 15, go into all the world and preach or proclaim the gospel to every creature, to the whole creation.

So that's their commission. And then verse 20, And they went out and preached everywhere. That's their obedience.

Now what's here in Mark 16's rendering of the great commission? Two commands. Go, preach. That's pretty simple.

Is that for elders? Is that for apostles and evangelists and pastors only? No. It's for the church. It's for every disciple.

Go, proclaim. Go, and as you go, share. Go, and as you have opportunity, share the gospel.

Over your fence, next door, at your job, on an airplane, as you go, proclaim. Two commands. Notice immediately their obedience.

Verse 15, they did it. They did it. They went out and preached everywhere.

John Wesley writes in his journal one place, Went to Bristol, stood on a table, and there I preached Christ. Isn't that great? Going to preach Christ. They did it.

Two commands to go and preach. One, evidence of their obedience. They went and they preached the gospel.

But also notice the end of verse 20. You have the copyist adding this statement that kind of is a cross-reference to Matthew 28.20. And lo, I'm with you always. While the Lord worked with them in confirming the message by accompanying signs.

Which the book of Acts exactly says that on Mark. So, that's Mark's account of the Great Commission. Now, we didn't read this, but we're going to read it now.

Turn to Luke 24. Luke 24. Verses 47-49.

Luke 24. 47-49. Actually, let's start with verse 46.

The Lord Jesus has appeared to His disciples here. These words are part of the words that He says to them right before He ascends to heaven. Remember, Matthew has some words that He says.

Acts chapter 1. Luke records there some of His words. But here is Luke's version. Verse 46.

He said to them, Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. He doesn't say, you know, you ought to consider witnessing.

It'll bring you enjoyment. It'll bring you joy. He doesn't say this is a responsibility you have.

You've got to do this. No, He says this is what you are. You are witnesses.

Witnessing is not something just that you do at times in speaking of Christ to others. A Christian is a witness of these things. You are witnesses of these things.

And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. These are declarations here in Luke 24 concerning the Great Commission. One thing, that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed to all nations.

And you are witnesses of these things. Two things to notice. Number one, Luke records, get this, this is quite interesting.

Luke records the doctrinal content of the message that we're to preach. Matthew doesn't do that. Mark doesn't do that.

John doesn't do that. But Luke gives us the doctrinal, theological if you will, content of what we're to preach. More about that in a moment.

But also notice verse 49. Verse 49 promises the empowering of the Holy Spirit needed in gospel proclamation. We will not be an effective witness without the empowering of the Holy Spirit upon us.

Behold, he says, I am sending the promise of the Father upon you. What was that? That was Pentecost. That was Acts chapter 1 and 2. And he says stay in the city.

Wait until you are endued with power. Stay in the city until that empowering is experienced. Now, the theological content of Luke's account.

Think about this. That repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed to all nations. Think about it.

Why did Jesus say, here's what you're to preach. Repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Why didn't He say justification? Why didn't He say obedience to the Savior? Why these two concepts? Repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Here's why. Because those summarize the message of the gospel that has to go out. It is a summary, those two concepts, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that results in the forgiveness of sins, that is a summary of the entire doctrinal content of gospel conversion.

And that's the way you should view it. That repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed. Think about it.

What is implicit in those words? Repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Here's what's implicit. Proclaim the gospel.

Implicit in that from repentance being preached to people having their sins forgiven, wrapped up in that is the proclamation of the gospel, the hearing of the gospel, the conviction and regeneration of sinners, the believing the message, saving faith, justification in new life. In other words, a complete, total turning of the heart and life to Jesus Christ in the gospel and now a knowing God, a knowing of God. As Paul said about the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1, how you turn to God from idols to serve the true and living God and to wait for His Son from Heaven.

This is the gospel Jesus told the disciples to go proclaim. Repentance and the forgiveness of sins. It's the gospel they proclaimed and this is our gospel which we are to proclaim, teach, share, spread, and live for because you are a witness if you're a Christian.

But, he says, go and proclaim this to who? Where? Well, look in Luke 24. He tells us, to all nations. To all nations.

The nations. Beloved, you sit in a nation and we are surrounded by other nations and across two little ponds of water there are a lot of nations. To the nations.

To the nations. The audience for this gospel is the nations. The target that we shoot gospel arrows at is our nation and other nations.

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to all creation. Now, it's amazing how much the Old Testament prophets saw this. They wrote about it.

They talked about the nations. For instance, Isaiah 61. Isaiah says, For as the earth brings forth its seed, its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout among all the nations.

Isaiah said it. Righteousness and praise. That's gospel righteousness and gospel praise.

We were having gospel praise this morning in all the songs we were singing. Righteousness and gospel praise, Isaiah says, is going to spring up in the nations. Daniel 7.14 says it's the Ancient of Days who is Jesus Christ.

The Ancient of Days, to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. Think about that. To Him was given dominion.

All authority is given unto Me. Heaven and earth. To Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom in order that all peoples, all nations, and languages should serve Him.

That is the motive for missions. That is the driving vision that inspires the spread of the gospel that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. You know, Revelation.

Well, I thought about Charles Wesley's words. He closes one of his great hymns with. The last stanza says, Preach Him to all and cry in death, Behold the Lamb.

Behold the Lamb. Zechariah 2 says it. For behold, I will come and will go in your midst, and many nations will give themselves to the Lord.

The prophets of the Old Testament saw it and prophesied about it, though they didn't fully understand it. And Jesus confirmed it earlier in Mark 13. He said, And this gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.

It's amazing in Luke 2. Verse 32. Simeon. Remember when they brought the Lord Jesus as a baby to the temple and Simeon took Him in his arms? Why? To dedicate Him to the Lord.

You talk about a baby dedication at church. Simeon takes the Christ child in his arms and you know what he says, among other things? He prophesies and he says, This child is a light for revelation to the Gentiles, to the nations, and for glory to your people. Galatians 3 says, Paul addresses, he says, In the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles, the nations, through faith, preach the gospel to Abraham saying, In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

You know what? Revelation. You don't need to turn there, but let me just read it to you. Revelation 21.

Virtually the closing of the Bible. John says this. Revelation 21-22.

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives its light and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

Beloved, He is the Savior of the world and He has been saving and He is saving and He will save a people from every tongue, every tribe, every nation, every people's group is going to make up the bride of Jesus Christ in that great city of God in the glory. He's the Savior of the world. Let the nations be glad, the Bible says.

The nations is where our commission is sent. And the nations are to be our target and our goal. One of the Gettys' songs is called Across the Lands.

And they sang this. With a shout, you rose victorious, wresting victory from the grave, and ascended into heaven, leading captives in your way. Now you stand before the Father, interceding for your own.

From each tribe and tongue and nation, you are leading sinners home. The great commission being carried out. Now I want us to quickly see the final great commission recorded in the book of Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. It's quite a thing.

Luke here, he gives an account of Jesus' words in Luke chapter 24. And he gives another account in Acts chapter 1. Because when Jesus ascends and He's seated at the right hand of the Father, He has one more thing to do and what is that? Pour out the Holy Spirit. When's He going to do that? The day of Pentecost.

The ascending of the Holy Spirit. So Luke connects the great commission with the day of Pentecost in Acts 1 and Acts chapter 2. And I want you to think of something. You know what's astounding? Have you ever noticed this? In every chapter in Acts, Acts chapter 1, Acts 1, how many chapters are in Acts? No, for you millennials, it's not 29.

Not Acts 29. Acts 28. 28 chapters.

You know what? In every chapter, there's proclamation. In every chapter, there's preaching. In every chapter, there's sharing.

Tracy, good study for you this week. Read every chapter. Go find every chapter and you'll see Peter's preaching.

And then Stephen's preaching. And then Philip's preaching. And then Saul of Tarsus is converted and he turns the world upside down preaching, teaching, sharing.

And the book of Acts closes with this verse. Let me read it to you. I wasn't ready for it, but listen to this.

Paul, he lived there two whole years at his own expense, welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus with all boldness and without hindrance. That's what every one of you need to be doing if you're a believer. You need to be proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

What's going to hinder you? Busyness, distractions, earthly things, the cares of this life. The Great Commission is not a suggestion. It's not an option.

We have our marching orders, beloved. And this is for every young person and every teenager and every young adult and every man and every woman who is a Christian. You have been commissioned.

Now turn to Acts 1 and we see Luke connecting this with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1. Let's read verses 1-8. Stay with me.

I'm almost done. Acts 1 verses 1-8. In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.

What was that? That was Luke's Gospel. What Jesus began to do and teach. Until the day He was taken up.

There's the ascension. After He had been given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. He presented Himself alive to them.

There's His appearances. After His suffering of many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the Kingdom of God. And while staying with them, He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem.

Wait! We've been given a great commission. We've got to get going. No, there's something that has to happen.

You've got to tarry until you're clothed with power. You have to tarry in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. So, Luke is connecting the great commission to the day of Pentecost.

Something must happen for the great commission to be effective. What is it? Well, look at Acts 1, verse 8. But you will receive power, that is authority, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. The Holy Spirit was already in them, right? If you're regenerate, the Holy Spirit's in you.

When you're converted, He's indwelling you. This is not talking about regeneration. This is not talking about being sealed with the Spirit at conversion.

This is talking about something happening to you from outside of you that is real. The Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Now the wording here in Acts 1 is close to the wording in Luke 24.

Luke, he says, I will send the promise of the Father on you and you will be clothed with power from on high. Luke says in Acts 1, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. But it's the same reality.

It's the same experience. It's the Spirit coming upon them, clothing them with power, or as Acts 1 says, they receiving power when the Spirit comes upon them. Luke in Acts 1 calls this being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and you'll receive power and you'll be clothed with power. What's here in Acts 1? Two commands. Two commands and two sovereign declarations.

Acts 1 verse 2, He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen and in verse 4, He says, He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait. Terry, wait in obedience until you are endued with power by the promise of the Father. Commands and then two sovereign declarations.

Look at verse 8. Verse 8 of Acts 1. There's no commands here in verse 8. Two sovereign declarations. You will receive power and you will be My witnesses. The Lord's just saying, you are going to receive power and you're going to be a witness.

And that is, beloved, that's our takeaway this morning. How does the Great Commission apply to you and I, to our church? Number one, declaration. If you're a Christian, you're called first to be a witness.

You are witnesses. You are, brother, a witness. Sister, you are a witness.

If you're a Christian, each of you, you are an ambassador of Jesus Christ. You are a servant of the Gospel. You are a missionary.

You are an evangelist. You are a witness. Now you might be a wife and mother in the earth.

You might be a mechanic or a barber. You might be a computer analyst or an engineer. You might be something else.

That's what you do in the earth temporarily. What you are, first and foremost, is a witness. And God's providing for you through those jobs to be a witness in the earth.

You're a witness. Every adult in here, of age at least, I have a friend on a plane. Somebody asked him, what do you do for a living? He says, well, I'm an ambassador.

Really? Yeah, I'm an ambassador in the U.S. for a foreign country, another country. Want to hear more about it? We're all ambassadors. You're an ambassador.

And there are those within your hearing, there are those within your sphere of influence in darkness, and you're the light around them. Are you an ambassador? Are we living for ourselves or are we living to carry out the Great Commission? This is real stuff here. You are a witness.

Secondly, how does this apply to us? As a witness, you have His promised presence and power. Luke 24, you'll be clothed with power from on high. Acts 1.8, you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

Divine power. A baptism of the Spirit upon you from Christ, the Giver of the Holy Spirit. And outpouring and effusion, ascending upon of the power of the Holy Spirit for witness and for evangelism.

Before Pentecost, easy things were difficult for the disciples to do. But after Pentecost, difficult things seemed easy at times. And the power of the Holy Spirit is what made the difference.

Let me ask you a question. Do you realize, do we realize, that the more we are empowered by and filled with the Holy Spirit, the more we will share Christ? The empowerment of the Holy Spirit brings gospel courage to speak when you're timid and fearful. The power of the Holy Spirit brings zeal and strength to keep sharing.

It brings vision and zeal and utterance and the enabling and ability day in and day out to share the gospel. Not by your mind, not by your power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord. Many of you need this.

It is missing in your life. I want to ask you a question. You answer it.

Answer this this morning if you're a Christian in your own heart. Has the Holy Spirit ever been poured out upon you in power? Some of you have to say no. I did not ask you, have you been regenerated? I did not ask you, do you have the Holy Spirit living inside you? Because every Christian does.

No, what I ask you is, have you ever had the Spirit of God poured out upon you from your ascended Savior who gives the Holy Spirit to His children to be a witness? Have you ever experienced a real outpouring of the Holy Spirit? This is from the cross to the grave to life to Heaven's throne, Heaven's

throne gift being ascended down and we're witnesses of this gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. How could the early church in Jerusalem turn their known world upside down because the Spirit of God was upon them? If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit to those who are asking? If this is true and here's what you're to do the rest of your life, go proclaim. Go testify.

Go share. Go share. This is why we are planting a church in Portland.

This is why we're planting a church in Amarillo, Texas. This is why we support missionaries. This is why we've gone overseas over these years.

Go, go, go. Jerusalem. Your Jerusalem.

Judea. Samaria. The uttermost.

We have a message to tell to the nations. There's a call come ringing o'er the restless waves. Send the light.

Henry Martin said this, The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of missions. And the nearer we get to Him, the more missionary we become. You are witnesses.

Go and tell. Go and share. God had one Son and He made Him an evangelist.

He came from the realms of heaven to this vile earth to bring the gospel to save sinners. And He's back in heaven and He's commissioned you and He is empowering for us to take this gospel to the nation. Keith Getty and Stuart Cowan wrote a hymn.

Just listen to this and then we're going to sing. In their hymn, O Church, Arise, they say this, Our call to war to love the captive soul but to rage against the captor and with the sword that makes the wounded whole, we will fight with faith and valor and face with trials on every side. We know the outcome is secure and Christ will have the prize for which He died an inheritance of nations.

So Spirit come, put strength in every stride, grace for every hurdle that we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant. Good and faithful as saints of old still line the way, retelling triumphs of His grace. We hear their calls and hunger for the day when with Christ we stand in glory.

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