

I Am With you', as You Go

by Richard E. Bieber

Jesus' commission to make disciples and the power of his presence with us as we obey his command is the core message of this sermon.

Scripture: Matthew 4:19, Matthew 9:37, Matthew 10:20, Matthew 28:16, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:14, Acts 8:26, 2 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Great Commission", "Faith And Trust"

Description

Richard E. Bieber emphasizes the calling and commissioning of the eleven disciples by Jesus, highlighting their lack of formal education but unwavering certainty in being called and sent by the Lord. These disciples, ordinary men, were empowered to make disciples and spread the Gospel, trusting in Jesus' promise to be with them always. The sermon challenges believers to step out in faith, knowing that Jesus' authority and presence accompany them as they fulfill the Great Commission.

Transcript

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and 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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20

Not one of those eleven men who met the Risen Lord on that mountain in Galilee could qualify as a Lutheran pastor or an Anglican priest. They didn't have a Master's Degree in Theology. They didn't even have a Bachelor's Degree. They'd never make it in any of our main-line churches today.

This lack did not seem to bother Jesus. It didn't bother them. These eleven men had three things going for them that many seminary graduates do not have:

They were certain that Jesus had called them to be his disciples.

They were certain that Jesus was sending them to make disciples.

They were certain that, as they did what he sent them to do, he'd be there, with all the power of heaven.

These men were called, not by some religious institution, but by the Lord Jesus. And they were sent, not to serve as chaplains to a chain of religious clubs, but to make disciples. So that's what they did. And the Lord was with them with all the authority of heaven.

We understand that every one of those eleven men, with the possible exception of John, died a violent death at the hands of persecutors. But before they died, they made disciples by the thousands.

How come those uneducated fishermen and tax collectors accomplished so much in their short lives, while we struggle to barely maintain the status quo? Simple. Those men staked their lives on Jesus' words to them, "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. I am with you as you make disciples, as you baptize, as you teach, as you do what I'm sending you to do."

When Peter stood up on Pentecost and started speaking to the crowd which had gathered in the street, amazed at hearing their own languages from these Galileans, Peter knew that he was a simple fisherman. He had never taken a Dale Carnegie course in public speaking. But Peter also knew that he was not alone. The Lord Jesus was right there with him. So he opened his mouth and spoke, and the Lord filled it with words that burned with fire. Before the day was over, 3000 people were baptized.

Philip the Deacon was walking along a lonely desert road when he heard horses coming up behind him. He turned and saw a magnificent chariot carrying an Ethiopian dignitary. A voice within him said, "Go up and join yourself to that chariot." Philip knew whose voice that was, so he obeyed. "Do you understand what you're reading from that scroll?"

"How can I unless someone explains this passage." Before sunset the Ethiopian was a disciple of Jesus.

"Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age, whether you see me or not, whether you feel my presence or not. As you do what I'm sending you to do, I'll be there."

If I'm sharing these words because this is part of my role as a "clergyman," there's no assurance that the Lord Jesus is with me. But if I'm sharing these words out of obedience to the Master, because he sent me, then, even if I stutter and stumble, he's with me, and the words will accomplish whatever he wants them to.

The same thing goes for you. You're under the same call I'm under, or you wouldn't have read this far. And the Lord Jesus did not call you to be a "church member in good standing," he called you to be his disciple! His apprentice, his student, his understudy.

He won't force you to answer his call. You can say, "Thanks anyway, Lord, but I just want to come to church once-in-a-while and live a respectable life. That's as far as I want to go." He won't twist your arm.

But you need to understand that Jesus never called you to mere church-going and respectability. He's calling you to follow him.....all the way to a cross.

If you accept his call, "Yes, Lord, here I am. I'm here to follow you all the way." Then you don't belong to yourself any more. You belong to him. When he says, "Come," you come. When he says "Go," you go. And when he says, "Go, make disciples", he's not sending you to sell Lutheranism, Catholicism, church membership or respectability, but simply to bring people to him. As you do that---even just try to do it---he's with you with all the power of heaven.

"Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age,".....as you make disciples, as you reach out and bless people in my name and touch them with my power.

What's so scary about making disciples? What's so scary about telling someone the living Lord is going to answer their heart-cry? What's so scary about offering to pray with a person who's weighed down with guilt or fear or loneliness or sickness?

When I was six years old, our first grade class was part of an operetta. A bunch of us little first graders were dressed up in mouse costumes, with big ears and long tails. There we were up on the stage in the local fire hall auditorium, trying to decide how to tie a bell on the big old cat, so we could hear the bell when the cat was coming.

We mice talked like big shots when the cat wasn't around. We made big plans, deciding which of us would sneak up to the cat while it was asleep, and slip the bell around her neck. It was all very exciting. Then, right in the middle of our meeting the look-out mouse whispered, "Here comes the cat!" And we all scampered away, as the cat took center-stage.

I met one time with a group of Christian university students on a large urban campus. In that meeting room with the door shut, everyone talked quite boldly about reaching out to the campus, making an impact! But when the meeting was over and we walked out the door, all the boldness evaporated, and we became timid little mice.

Inside our churches we can talk about witnessing, reaching out to the community, making an impact. But when we're out there in "Cat Country," we're like those little mice, always looking for a hole to crawl into. "Sorry, Lord, this ain't my cup of tea."

"All authority in heaven and 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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

"What's there to be afraid of, if I'm with you? And I will be with you, if you'll just go out there and do it."

And, by the way, you don't wait until you feel his presence and then go. (You might wait for years.) You go in obedience to his command and you will have his presence, whether you feel it or not.

How can I expect him to be with me with all authority in heaven and on earth, if I'm sitting on the couch biting my nails? How can I expect him to be with me with all the power of heaven, as I recline in my Lazy Boy watching some famous evangelist on TV?

As long as I'm wrapped up in myself, doing my own thing---even if it's a religious thing--"Lo, I am with you always" is just a cliché, an empty Bible quote. But the minute I get off the couch, pick up the phone and call that person---the Lord is with me. The moment I climb out of my Lazy Boy and head for the hospital where that lonely old woman waits to see a friendly face---that's when he's with me with all the power of heaven.

"But what if I get to the hospital, enter the lady's room and can't find anything to say?" You don't need a sales pitch, a canned speech, flowery words. Just be yourself out there in Cat County, holding on to the promise,

"I am with you, as you go about my business.

I am with you as you serve that person in my name.

I am with you as you share your bread, your money.

As you lay hands on the sick.

As you pray to the Father in my name.

I'll be there with all the power of heaven."

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Those eleven men were just like we are. When they saw Jesus alive from the dead, some worshiped him; some doubted. They had their misgivings and doubts like we do. Some of them were like little mice. But when Jesus said, "Go," they went. And as they went, they received his presence and his power.

It's the same with us. We have our misgivings and our doubts. But Jesus says, "Go!" And as we go, we too receive his presence and his power.

"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

We don't have to go to Africa. We don't even have to go to the town down the road. The mission field is right outside the walls of our church. Each of us is being sent out there to people.

People just like we are.

Some of them are ripe and ready.

Some of them are hard as nails.

All we have to do is be out there in his name, and the Lord Jesus himself will work his miracles through us.

"Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age....

....as you go and do what I'm sending you to do."

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