

“Jesus’ Three Verse Sermon”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 5/17/2020

Text: Matthew 28:16-20 at FBC of Newport, NH

//16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”//

—Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV)

Going to Galilee was very important for Jesus. It was the place where he had all along planned to meet with his disciples once he was raised from the dead. The “eleven” are the only ones mentioned, but the context and content indicate the likelihood of others being there as well, possibly a crowd of more than five hundred brethren. (See 1 Corinthians 15:6.) Galilee was a much more friendly and open place than Jerusalem and closer to the homes of the many believers established during Christ’s ministry there. So it makes sense that word would go out from the core of the apostles, “the eleven,” to the ears of other believers, especially in Galilee, that Jesus was going to keep his appointment on that mountain. Can you imagine being one of the disciples who hears the word? “Hey! Are you going to the mountain to see if Jesus will be there?” I think this is what’s behind the verse: *//17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.//* It makes little sense applied to the eleven, as Jesus had already addressed their doubts numerous times, both in Jerusalem and in Galilee. But for most in such a crowd this would be their first encounter with the risen Jesus.

This would be the climactic reason why going to Galilee was so important to Jesus. However, it was not simply to see Jesus, important as that was. It was also to hear him, to be instructed by Jesus to go *from* Galilee that the world might be invaded by disciples of Jesus. Word of his resurrection was not going to just take off on its own. This word, the “Good News” word, was going to go out to the world written on the scrolls of human lives immersed in the fullness of God, taught in the truth of it and trained in obedience to the lordship of Christ. These ambassadors would together be like the body of Jesus itself serving as evidence to the resurrection. All this is summed up in the one verse: *//19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.//* But I doubt the message Jesus delivered was just one verse long. Surely this was but a summary, inspired by the Holy Spirit, given for the church to ponder and preach for a thousand years.

Besides, we know Jesus’ message was at least three verses long!

Two important parts around that summary are the beginning and the end. (Hey! A complete three part sermon!) The beginning establishes the authority by which the church can go and preach, teach, baptize and proclaim Jesus is Lord, risen from the dead. That authority comes from Jesus himself. He *is* risen from the dead. From Mary Magdalene running back from the cemetery to Billy Graham preaching to a billion people at one time, the core foundation of their message is the fact of Jesus being made known to them by virtue of his being *alive*. There are numerous other ways in which Jesus has the authority to command the Great Commission to the church (for one see John 17:2), but that is a perfectly good start for now.

The ending is also perfect for encouraging those who would go out into the world seeking to make disciples of Jesus from all the different ‘people groups’ throughout the world and down through time. Jesus goes with us. He doesn’t just send us out and then play cards up in heaven. He actively rules from the throne of God. Besides his ability to literally blink-in and blink-out of a room and listen to people like Thomas while supposedly being “away,” Jesus has other ways to be with us to the end of the age. One big one I’ve already mentioned is that throne upon which he sits after his ascension. (Next week’s message, btw.) It’s the throne of God! Jesus rules from that throne with all the resources that go with it.

We think there’s a lot that comes with the position of President of the United States: a big white house, armored limousine, a huge blue jet, a hot-phone to Russia, and a rather popular Twitter account. Just think what it would be like if such a person was a close enough friend to be but a phone call away and able to bring his resources to bear upon whatever your situation was. In keeping with his own agenda, of course.

Well, Jesus has infinitely greater resources and a much closer presence with us. And his agenda is summarized in the Great Commission. So there should be no worry as we seek to fulfill it in obedience to him.

Let me close with one idea of what we can do, personally and as a church, to make the most of this Great Commission. We should let the Great Commission inspire us as we seek to move out of a time of not knowing what to do next and into the Promised Land. As our country is trying to figure out how to go from being “closed down” to being “open for business,” let this be but a backdrop to our church moving from a time of complacency or wandering to a time of hungering and thirsting after God. And God, right now, has made it plain what his people should focus upon—disciples. Not people who make an empty profession. Not even people who make a real confession looking exactly like an empty confession. The goal is disciples. Baptized, instructed and obedient ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave us the Great Commission. Matthew gave us three verses of it. I’m giving you two pages. Go now. As we seek to give the world disciples, whose whole lives serve for the proving that Jesus Christ is risen and he is Lord.