

16But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I relish my study times. I was brought up in a christian tradition that honors those who apply some diligence each week in order to have something worthwhile to say to the people God has entrusted to them. I take that very seriously.

Normally I catch little sections of time during my work week to ponder and meditate on these texts. I don't sacrifice my employers time, but I drive long distances on range or do types of work where my hands can accomplish what they are paying me to do while my brain can be listening to someone speak.

So I have a couple of hero's I listen to. Better teachers than me who have taught the passages I'm working on. I'll download the mp3 files and burn CD's to listen to. Background for study. Meditation. Ideas. Sometimes I take a note pad and the ideas come so fast I might pull the car over for a minute and write them down on a steno pad for later.

Then, usually, Friday is dedicated to study and pulling everything together into what you folks are going to hear. Sometimes Saturday is also required. It was this time.

I say all that to say, this week has been tough. This passage is tough to study and tough to preach, because it's the most important words in Matthews book, (more on that in a minute,) but the problem I have this morning is; the words are not difficult to understand, but I have failed for 46 years and 7 months to consistently DO this.

Now, to lighten this up for a moment, we have a quip that we throw around and it always gets a laugh. "you had one job". Type that into

google images and you can sit and laugh for a minute at all the dopey things we humans do.

Gary Larson farside cartoon; one polar bear lifts up the igloo. It's the other polar bear's job to grab the eskimo that's running away. He's standing there with a goofy look on his face and the first polar bear says; "you had one job", right.

The guys painting the road line that fall asleep and the line wobbles all over the road. "you had one job". The package of corn on the cob with the sticker that says "watermelon" on it. you had one job! Every possible kind of epic fail imaginable. One thing to focus on, just one thing, and you can't even accomplish one thing.

MacArthur begins this section of scripture, which by the way, it takes him 2 sundays to preach, but he begins this section by asking; What is the purpose of the church? Why are we here?

And all sorts of answers come to mind. The church is for fellowship. The church is for music. The church is for teaching and learning. The church is a lighthouse. A clubhouse. Why are we here?

In American evangelicalism, the church has become like a hobby. God is a hobby. When we're caught up on the important stuff, all the must do's, if there's time left and we're so inclined, maybe we'll go to church. That would be nice. Engage in our hobby. If we feel like it.

Or, God is like a plug-in. Our life is a computer program. We've got a big program on our computer but it didn't come with a font that we want so we download a plug-in that works on our program and provides some feature we want. We're the main program, God is the plug-in.

Or getting a little more modern, God is an app that we download for our i-phone. Just one of the icons that pop up on the 2nd or 3rd page. Available if we need it. Car just drove over a cliff? Click on the God app.

Back to MacArthur's question. Why are we here? What is the purpose

of the church? I've tried to introduce some levity because of the gravity of the question. But it really isn't funny. ***I gave you one job.***

Matthew has invested 18,345 greek words in his gospel to get us to these 51 words. This passage is the purpose of the whole book. This is the main message. The most important thing, by far. Everything leading up to this is background to get us ***here!*** In these 51 words, Jesus is going to assign the church it's one job. Individually and corporately; I gave you one job.

16But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

The first thing we see in the passage is availability and obedience. Jesus told the eleven disciples, to meet him at the mountain in Galilee. He told them before His death and resurrection that He would meet them in Galilee, and He told the women who first saw Him risen and alive, to tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee.

In first Corinthians 15 Paul outlines the different post resurrection appearances of Jesus. He states; *He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. 6After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep....*

Bible scholars are mostly in agreement that this mention of more than 500 could very likely be the meeting at the mountain in Galilee. We mustn't be too dogmatic. We really don't know for certain. It's also possible that only the 11 are there. That much is written, the rest is a guess.

There is some sense though, no matter the number, that this meeting is the beginning of a new covenant. This meeting in Galilee is the infant churches first summit.

I mentioned New Covenant in that last paragraph. The meeting in Galilee is important. Why Galilee, when all of the old testament

prophecies picture the Messiah ruling on David's throne in Jerusalem?

Exactly. Exactly. This is NOT that. There is purpose in this summit conference of believers in Galilee, not Jerusalem. The church is in it's first infant breaths. It is going to receive it's marching orders at this summit conference in Galilee.

This is NOT messiah reigning for a thousand years in Jerusalem. Paul always refers to the church age as a mystery. Something new, not seen in ages past. The Old testament did not reveal the church age. In Romans 11 Paul says; 25 *I do not want you to be ignorant of this **mystery**, brothers, so that you will not be conceited: (what mystery Paul?) A hardening in part has come to Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.*

The church age is about to be born on this mountain with these words that Jesus will utter to His apostles, and perhaps more than 500 believers if this is the time mentioned in Corinthians. The covenant with Israel is set aside. God will through these 11 apostles, and one come-lately named Paul, go not only to Israel, but to all the nations of the world!

Pinch yourselves. Here we are today. Direct descendants, every one, to one of these people who were at that mountain in Galilee 1,984 years ago. There is an unbroken line, if you are truly redeemed, to that summit of believers on that mountain that day, receiving their marching orders from Jesus the messiah, and then obediently . . . doing what He said.

We see the church begin at Jerusalem, with 120 in an upper room when the Holy Spirit comes and Peter preaches to the men of Israel. But I will contend, the marching orders that something new is afoot, take this gospel to the nations, happens importantly, not in Jerusalem, but in Galilee of the gentiles.

17When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.

The infant church is available. They considered being part of this meeting, this summit on the mountain, more important than anything

else. They were obedient. Jesus said to meet Him on a certain mountain at a certain time, the mountain and the day are lost to us, but they all knew, and they are obedient.

And when they see Jesus, risen from the dead, murdered by evil men, but made alive again by God, when they see Him, they worship. The infant church is available, it is obedient, and corporately, they worship the risen Lord of all the earth.

but some were doubtful. . . The Bible is so honest. Nobody could have made this stuff up. If you did, you wouldn't insert this here! some were doubtful.

We looked briefly at Thomas last week. In John 20. Doubting Thomas. He gets that distinction for eternity. And in Mark's gospel we see some of the disciples disbelieving the resurrection reports of the women, and also the brothers who Jesus met on the road to the country. He appears to them and reproaches some for their hardness of heart and disbelief. Maybe the same incident as John described about Thomas.

But the first words in vs. 18 are helpful. *And Jesus came up and spoke to them* . . The idea is that He appeared at a distance and came closer to them. *and Jesus came up.* Within the greek tenses of those words is the idea of drawing closer. Were there some who still disbelieved until that moment when they draw close to the risen Lord?

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

That's a jaw dropping statement. And none of my hero's that I listened to went to where my mind immediately goes with those words. The word authority always triggers in my mind the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God. Jesus came preaching, Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. The authority to reign of God. As opposed to Satan who is presently the god of this world.

Satan has authority to reign in this world. An authority given to Adam, but usurped by Satan when Adam sinned.

Every man born into this world, according to this book, is born dead. Spiritually dead. Separated spiritually from God. David says in Psalm 51, *in sin did my mother conceive me*. We are born into Satans usurped rebellion, children of our father, Adam. We are enemies of God from the womb.

Turn on your TV's and watch the news. The word for world used often in the new testament is Cosmos. World systems. The world is in a mess and getting worse because Satan is the ruler of the cosmos. The world systems.

When you begin to understand who rules this world, and the lost condition of rebellious men, it doesn't take long to learn that, thank God there is some restraint of evil still present in this world.

God is the ultimate owner. Satan must obey Him. But the world is under the rule and powers of Satan, restrained by God. In the tribulation period, those restraints are removed and half the worlds population perishes. Half.

Authority . . . to reign . . . is the theme of this book. From the garden where God comes and searches for Adam and Eve who are hiding from Him, until this very day. This book is the story of man, lost, searched out, and redeemed out of his sin by God. Redeemed out of Satans world systems into God's ownership.

So when Jesus walks up to these perhaps 500+ worshippers, bought out of this world by His Father and given to Him, cleansed by His blood, spilled on the cross, and says to them "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* " That is earth shattering good news.

Listen to the words of the Lord's prayer;

9“*Pray, then, in this way:*
‘Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name.

10' *Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.*

Thy kingdom come. We're praying for a time, not yet here, when Satan is deposed, and God has re-taken the authority to reign on this earth.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, like it is in heaven.

Come and reign on earth. Come and cause your will to be done on earth.

I got tickled the other day. Al Mohler who I revere, was talking about the news piece about the planets they have found now in some solar system that they believe could have an environment similar enough to earth that they could support life. And Al said something like, we don't know if there's other life in the universes beyond ours.

And my mind went straight to these verses.

9' *Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.*

10' *Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.*

That covers it. Everything. All of the universes are bound up in that one word, heaven. God dwells there. Whatever is out there that we can both see and not see with all of our technology, is His dwelling.

And the Bible pictures those unfathomable unmeasurable reaches of space as nothing more than a curtain that hides God in His righteousness. This earth is just one infinitesimal rock in the middle of all of that, that is in rebellion against God. And according to the next

line in the Lord's prayer, it's the only one. *Your kingdom come, Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.*

God's rule is complete in all of heaven. Think of that next time you read Psalm 2. *Why did the nations rage.*

In all of the universes, known and unknown, there's one tiny rock where the nations rage against God. Out of a population in AD 33 of 250 million. Jesus has a little over 500 who belong to Him. Men and women, boys and girls. Real believers. Maybe less. In Acts 2, in Jerusalem we only find 120.

Now, listen again to what Jesus just told these worshippers who belong to Him. *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "*

This tiny rock, this place where the nations rage against Him; He owns it all. He owns every created thing in all of the heavens, including this one rock that rages against Him. He has authority to reign. He over-rules . . . ***everything!***

The word translated authority is exousia. We translate it as power, authority, ownership. Simply stated, He's the boss. OF everything. Period.

The Bible uses the word doulos very often. Doulos is the word that means a common slave. Someone owned by someone else.

Everything in the universe falls into that category with this person Jesus who rose from the dead. Every created thing belongs to Him and He may do with them as He wishes. Sooner or later, every knee will bow to Him.

How does that work then, with Satan and everything. Why doesn't He come and throw Satan out and judge all sin and set up His righteous Kingdom?

Actually, He could have done that the day after Adam sinned. But it pleases God to glorify Himself by redeeming fallen men and women and

children. He will come and depose Satan and set up His rightful throne in Jerusalem, but just now, He is redeeming His elect, purchased by the blood shed on the cross, from all the nations, one by one.

It is glorious to God that He will redeem men so numerous that they will be numbered like the sand on the seashore. He plucks them, one at a time, out of Satan's kingdom and into His glorious authority.

So in a sense, given what He has just told this tiny group of people, Satan's vicious reign on earth is over-ruled. Jesus owns it all. But for now, at least, God is redeeming men, out of this world, yet still in this world, one by one.

When someone becomes a christian, it is a transfer of ownership. Born in sin, guilty of rebellion against God, under the reign of Satan, a cruel taskmaster, each person who is redeemed by forgiveness of sin comes out of Satan's rule and is transferred into God's rule.

Paul describes this transaction in his life to King Agrippa in Acts 26:14 - 18 *“And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 “And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 ‘But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’*

Jesus tells Paul, I'm sending you to the gentiles to open their eyes so they can turn from darkness, Satans' realm and authority, to light, God's authority. So that they will come out of Satans' dominion and into God's dominion. So that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance.

That is the description of a christian. No longer belongs to Satan. Sins are forgiven. Does belong to God. It's a glorious transfer of ownership. You were a slave either way, but you just got a winsome new taskmaster who loves you and wants what is best for you. He will make you a son and a brother. It's the best news anyone can ever ever hear! Jesus has the authority to make that happen. All authority in heaven and on earth.

This understanding is why I'm very old school these days. I question people who claim to be christians because they mumble some words or believe something about Jesus, but do not have any evidence of a new life under His authority.

If Jesus is king in a life, there **MUST** be change. We come out of Satan's authority and we bow to a new master. We live in His house, under His rules. His authority. No longer rebels.

*“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Therefore!*** There's that word. Based on what I just said. What did He just say. He owns everything! Therefore!

19“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

This is the marching orders of anyone who has come out from the authority of Satan and come under the authority of the Lord of the universes, Jesus.

This is not a suggestion. This is a command, to the church. To every person everywhere who belongs to Jesus. Because I have all authority everywhere, you go everywhere, and make disciples.

The single word we translate as Go is in the greek already in the past tense. Looking back on the therefore, it's already done. It really reads more like, Having gone, therefore, make disciples.

make disciples Another interesting word. mathēteusate make disciples is all one word. Verb. Aorist Imperative Active 2nd person plural. It's an imperative. A command. This is what you DO. Make disciples.

We here this more now than I remember growing up. Someone saying, Make it happen. You! Go! Make it happen! That's the idea here. Make disciples.

make disciples of all the nations The command is to start making disciples and don't stop until the earth is covered with them.

This is radical enough to us. Daunting enough. But to jews, they were the chosen people. The people of God, supposedly. All nations? Oh my. This is brand new. Unheard of. Never even dreamed of.

We can speculate all day on whether they would have ever accomplished this command. They begin in Jerusalem but God has to keep intervening to get the church out of there and into the whole world.

First, a persecution forces them out of their comfort zone, they are scattered but we could ask, would they have ever gotten the job done if God hadn't stopped one Saul of Tarsus in his tracks and converted him to go and do the job.

make disciples of all the nations OK, make disciples. How?

baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

When they've heard the good news and have come out of the old, into the new life, gladly, then what. Then you're going to baptize them.

Salvation is a regeneration. A quickening from the dead inside a persons heart. Unseen. But if that happens, the evidence of new ownership is immediate and obvious.

Baptism is a picture of death, burial and resurrection. You go down into the water, death and burial of the old you, and come up out of the water, raised together with Christ in newness of life. Baptism is a witness to the world that you are changed from the inside out. You no longer belong to Satan and the old life. Now you are raised together with Christ into newness of life.

You were dead spiritually, now you are alive. You were blind spiritually, now you see. Baptism is the picture to the world that this has happened in your life. It is declarative. I'm dead to sin, alive with Christ. The old me is dead and buried, the new me is alive, raised up together with Christ. We declare that truth to the onlooking world in baptism.

Baptism does not save you. God does that. Inside you. But baptism is a picture that tells the world, you are a new creature in Christ.

Notice it says *baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*,

in the name of. I'm immersed into all three persons of the trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I am all of theirs, they are all of mine.

This is also a verse we use with folks who are struggling with a trinitarian God. Notice; one name, three persons. It doesn't say in the name of the Father and in the name of the Son and in the name of the Holy Spirit. That would be necessary if we're talking about 3 separate persons. But it's redundant talking about One God who is three persons.

We baptize them into a name. They belong to a person. Who? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Which one? All of them, one name.

20teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

This is the part we forget. Mostly we fail at the whole thing. But too often there are evangelists who are interested in putting notches in their rifle stock. And that's as far as it goes. That is NOT discipling. Jesus said you Go and Make disciples.

Sharing the gospel is part of that. Baptizing them is part of that. But then comes the real work of making disciples. Teaching them. What? To observe all that I commanded you.

Sanctification is a big scary 5 syllable word. Simple. We, over time,

learn to be more like Jesus, and less like our old self. That is a big part of making disciples.

The truths I just described, pictured in baptism, unfortunately are what we call "positional truth". It's true because I've been born again. Positionally, everything is complete. And I have the downpayment for all of it, the indwelling Holy Spirit. But practically, I find, the old Jim isn't dieing so quickly and easily as I wish.

Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus. 18 months in Corinth. He didn't just go there and have a crusade and then go on to the next city. He spent time, again and again, teaching new christians the ABC's of the new life.

In the large church that I grew up in there were elders and teachers who rotated continuously through a classroom situation called Fundamentals of the faith. And that's exactly what they did. Take a group of baby christians who either just got saved, or sometimes had been saved for years and never learned a thing in some dead church, and teach those folks the basics.

That's what I have been trying to do for 3 years from this pulpit. This has been a fundamentals of the faith class. Verse by verse. Line upon line. Precept upon precept.

There's still more depth in that statement of Jesus. Make disciples. Baptize them. Teach them, what? Teach them so they'll all be Bible eggheads. That isn't what it says, is it.

Teach them to what? *Observe all I have commanded you.* This is the hardest part of all. It's one thing to sit and learn. It's quite another to live it out practically. Observe doesn't mean look from a distance, it means actually DO IT.

Jesus gives the church a formula, which if followed, cannot help but turn the church into a vibrant, living, place. Make disciples. Baptize them. Teach them. Teach them to actually DO what I commanded. Everywhere. All nations. These are your marching orders.

Does that sound daunting. Perhaps. But if we got serious about this, it would be exhilarating. This formula is a description of the church according to Jesus. Making disciples is a process. We share the good news. We gather them in. We baptize them. We teach them what Jesus commanded. We all observe. We actually do it. Continuously, over and over and over again, this process.

This is not a social club. This is not a hobby. I don't see anywhere where He says, some of you do this, you super saints, and the rest of you, sit and watch. Maybe complain. Come when you feel like it.

I told you, the words themselves are not complicated. This isn't hard to understand. It's the observe part that we trip over. I'll admit, it's daunting. Thinking about knocking on my neighbors' doors and sharing the gospel terrifies me for some reason. Why is that? Maybe I'll analyze that for 47 more years.

Well, the next part is either exciting or sad. There's no middle ground. Jesus says, *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”

Here's what I mean by either exciting or sad. If I don't go to my neighbor's, He likewise doesn't go with me.

Don't misunderstand. Don't mis-quote me. The Holy Spirit dwells inside me. Jesus lives inside my heart. And He has promised, I will never leave you or forsake you. That's promised to the faithful and even the not-so-faithful.

But there's another sense in which He is with me. When I do venture out into uncharted waters, it's exciting. It's exhilarating because He's right there with me. Knock on some door, we used to do this in **evangelism explosion**. Knock on some door and every person you talk with is different. And the Spirit makes the conversations crackle. Sparks sometimes fly. It's as real as it gets. *Lo, I am **with** you always.*

That **with** is more than just in-dwelling. It's a presence when you're out on the front line knocking on doors. If we get to baptize a bunch of new people, Jesus will be with us, doing that. If we teach and actually

observe what Jesus commanded, He will be with us, doing that.

On the other hand, if we just play church social club like a hobby meeting, who needs Jesus for that. Why would He come. We can do the hobby meeting without Him. There's churches all over this nation doing *that*.

Last week I was talking with the fellow in Albuquerque who bought the green Model A coupe from me. He had gone to the Model A Ford Club of America local chapter meeting in Abq. Big group. Apparently there are 200 of them in Abq.

So I asked him, (because I've been to those deals before) was it a religion to those folks and the meeting is church. And he laughed and said, yep, exactly.

You don't need Jesus for church. Join a Model A club. It's the same deal. Listen to Garrison Keilor, Prairie Home Companion on the radio. It's church. Music. Often great music. A few jokes. And then the sermon. Who needs Jesus. Garrison just talks about a mythical place, Lake Wobegon. After the "sermon" a few more songs. Then do it again next week. Even the world loves church. As long as Jesus isn't there.

One final thing to think about. *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"

What is the end of the age. What age. Well the word means consumation. Something is a work in progress until a day comes and it's finished. At the consumation of the age, the church age will be finished, there will be a seven year period of fulfillment and terror for the Jews, and then, Jesus will return to this earth, depose Satan, lock him away, and reign on this earth in a new age we call the millenium.

A thousand years of the Lords prayer answered. *Thy will be done on earth, like it is in heaven.* An eden like paradise, on this earth. And we will reign with Him. Physically. In bodies. But until that time, we dwell in this age. And He promises to be with us, in this age, and also in the one to come.

Back to our original question. What is the purpose of the church? What is our one job? If we had answered To glorify God and enjoy Him forever, that would have been a good answer.

But bound up in glorifying God is redemption. God is glorified and the angels rejoice, when the church goes out and steals souls from Satan. God glorifies Himself by adding people to His church. Saved out of this world, transplanted into His kingdom.

This entire process of adding redeemed people to His church, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all He commanded, all those things are what gives glory to God. Over and over again while He tarries. That is the purpose of the church.

He gave us one job. How are we doing?