

Matthew 28:16–17 | “Christ Wants to Use Me?!”
Preached on August 18th, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew 28, verse 16. *[pauseeee]*

As books typically lead up to the conclusion, so also here, everything in the book of Matthew has been leading up to this conclusion...

And it's the Great Commission. *[pause]*

It's a very important and significant teaching, and so what I want to do is to take the Great Commission, and preach 4 sermons on it. *[pause]*

We are going to really just slow down and take in what Jesus says here as He commissions His disciples to be on mission in the world.

And I hope and pray that God will use His Word to help motivate, encourage, and instill in each of us a mission mindset. *[pauseeeee]*

Do you remember growing up when teams were chosen for some game or competition and they picked the teams by having “team captains”? *[pause]*

Two people would be considered the team captains, and they would each go back and forth, choosing a person to join their team. *[pause]*

The couple people who were the best were always chosen first, and you knew that they would be chosen first.

But as the picking went on, you started to wonder, “Am I going to be chosen last?” *[pause]*

It could sometimes be a nerve-wracking thing!

If you were chosen, you sighed with relief and walked to the team with joy.

But the worst thing was being chosen last. *[pauseeee]*

Even the team captain's face showed someone who would rather you not be on the team, but they knew that they had to pick somebody, and you're “it”. *[pauseeee]*

Being chosen last felt like such a shameful thing because everyone's eyes were on you and you walked the walk of shame to your team, knowing that no one really wanted you. *[pauseeee]*

But there were other times that were surprising...

These were the times where you expected to be picked towards the last for something, but shockingly, you were picked pretty early on. *[pause]*

When this happened, you were like, “Who, me?” and you looked around, wondering if they meant to pick someone else. *[pause]*

In that moment, it felt like a great honor that amidst your weaknesses and failings, they would want you to be a part of their team. *[pause]*

Well what we see here with Jesus is that amidst all of our weaknesses, sins, and failings, He chooses *us* for His grand mission.

And the only thing we can think is, “Who, me?” *[pauseeee]*

We are going to mainly focus on verses 16 and 17 this morning, but to get the whole Great Commission on our minds, let’s READ verses 16–20. *[READ]*

This is the famous Great Commission passage. *[pause]*

It’s a serious, high, important calling that we as disciples of Jesus are called to, and it shows us that...

I. Jesus has a great mission for us.

Right before this passage, Jesus rose from the dead, and now He calls His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. *[pause]*

But out of all the places that Jesus *could have* met His disciples—why Galilee? *[pause]*

Was it just a random choice, or was there something more to it? *[pause]*

I believe that it’s notable that Jesus chooses Galilee because that’s where Jesus *began* His ministry. *[pause]*

Back in Matthew 4, Jesus withdrew to Galilee and began to preach.

That’s where it says that “the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.”¹ *[pause]*

He even calls His first disciples while walking by the Sea of Galilee, and performs many miracles there. *[pause]*

So basically here we are at the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and everything has come full circle back to Galilee, where it all began. *[pauseeee]*

So this seems to be an intentional teaching moment by Christ. *[pause]*

It’s like He’s saying, “Remember when we first met...

Remember all that I did and taught you...

¹ Matthew 4:16.

Remember the mission to the farthest reaches of those in darkness...

Now continue my ministry and mission in the world.” *[pause]*

By coming back full circle to Galilee at the end of His earthly ministry, He’s saying, “Now go and do likewise.” *[pauseee]*

As the disciples stood back in the region where it all began, they could remember all that happened in the past few years and be propelled on into their own future ministries. *[pauseee]*

Their training time was over, and now it was time to “get to work”.

Their ministry would continue what Christ had been doing. *[pauseeee]*

As Jesus made them disciples, so now they would go make disciples. *[pause]*

As Jesus taught them, so now they would teach others. *[pause]*

As Jesus was sent by the Father, so now they are sent out into the world.² *[pauseeee]*

The mission that the disciples were sent on—and which we get to be a part of—is great because it continues Jesus’ mission in the world.

It is a continuation of Jesus’ ministry, as He works in the world *through* us. *[pauseeee]*

What a privilege and honor!

We get to be used by Jesus Christ, the great Son of God and Lord!

What higher calling do we have than that?! *[pauseee]*

To highlight the importance of this commission, Jesus gives these marching orders *on a mountain*. *[pause]*

Now to many people, they overlook that fact, or count it as inconsequential.

But for those steeped in the Bible, mountains signify something noteworthy. *[pause]*

God met Moses on a mountain and gave the Law, and guess where Jesus gave His great Sermon?

There’s a reason why it’s called “the Sermon on the Mount”. *[pauseeee]*

What about the Transfiguration? Where did that happen? A mountain. *[pause]*

Well what a better place to commission His disciples than on a mountain, showing how important their mission is. *[pause]*

² A reference to John 20:21.

A place that symbolizes revelation and significance is where they are sent out on a mission.

It's highlighting the importance of this moment and this command. [pauseeee]

We are truly called to something great, grand, and glorious by Jesus Christ Himself. [pauseeeee]

In 1776, the Americans were struggling to win in the Revolutionary War. [pause]

They lacked manpower, as well as much-needed supplies. [pause]

They needed allies and fast.

So amidst that struggle, they sent someone on an important mission: Benjamin Franklin.³
[pauseeee]

Ben Franklin was sent to France in order to get the French to become allies with America and provide men and supplies for the war. [pauseeee]

Eventually, through his efforts, Ben Franklin was able to convince France to lend aid to America, and the rest is history, as they say. [pause]

Many people believe that if America never received support from France, then it would never have won the war. [pause]

Ben Franklin's mission was important for that time, but did you know that we have been called to something even greater than that? [pause]

It's true!

Jesus has a great mission for us, for it's a great, grand, and global mission that impacts people's eternities! [pause]

The Son of God, Messiah, and Lord calls us to make disciples of all nations. [pause]

We continue His ministry in the world, as He works through us.

We follow in His footsteps, ministering how He would have us, teaching and baptizing people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. [pauseeee]

Now more could be said about the importance of this mission, and I will talk more about that next week, but I want to focus on something else this morning with our remaining time. [pause]

Jesus has a great mission for us, and amidst that...

II. He uses us despite our failures.

³ <https://www.history.com/news/benjamin-franklin-france>.

Think about how Jesus calls His disciples to the Great Commission, all the while, they had just failed miserably. *[pause]*

These are the disciples who fled when Jesus was arrested. *[pause]*

They were nowhere to be found when Jesus was going through His hardest moments. *[pause]*

They were scared and cowering away somewhere, and now Jesus is calling the cowering, fleeing disciples to serve in His grand mission?

That's crazy! *[pause]*

Among the disciples is Peter, who denied Jesus 3 times! *[pause]*

What a miserable moment that was.

What a horrific thing to do, and yet Peter is among those who Jesus desires to use?

That's just astounding to me. *[pauseeee]*

Usually when we pick someone to do something for us, we choose the best candidates, not the ones who just failed us.

Yet that's Jesus for you—He chooses the unlikely, and extends grace to those who have failed. *[pauseeee]*

If it were us, we would have given up on this band of disciples long ago, or at the very least after they fled. *[pause]*

We would have probably been bitter, and never wanted to see them again.

And yet Jesus wants to see them and not only that, He wants these very “failures” to be the foundational pillars⁴ of His mission in the world. *[pause]*

Jesus gives grace, and then He gives more grace! *[pauseeee]*

In this story, Jesus had just recently risen from the dead, and the disciples probably remember how miserably they had failed Jesus by fleeing away from Him during His arrest. *[pause]*

And now they hear that He wants to meet them in Galilee? *[pause]*

Could there have been some hesitancy? *[pause]*

Could there have been some question as to what Jesus would say to them? *[pause]*

I'm sure there was at least some of that.

⁴ A reference to Ephesians 2:20.

Yet as they are most likely thinking and feeling some of those things, He tells them to meet Him.

And I love how in verse 18 it says, “And Jesus came and said to them.” *[pauseeee]*

Jesus *came* to them! *[pause]*

He didn’t withdraw away from them in disgust and frustration...

He didn’t keep His distance in bitterness and anger for what they had done...

He drew near to them, as He came to them! *[pauseeee]*

Oh, what love and grace of Jesus! *[pause]*

Jesus draws near to sinners! *[pause]*

Amidst your sins and failures, Christ wants to draw near to you! *[pauseeee]*

Way too many times when we sin and fail, we think that Jesus merely has a look of frustration and disgust...

We picture Him sometimes standing there with a scowl on His face, shaking His head and then walking away from us.

But that’s not Jesus! *[pause]*

Discard that wrong view of Jesus, for that’s not the Jesus of the Bible!

He draws near to sinners! *[paueeee]*

His incarnation, life, and death are all evidence that Jesus draws near to sinners. *[pause]*

Why do you think He came to this earth?

Wasn’t it so that He could draw near to sinners, in order to redeem them? *[pause]*

Why do you think He mingled among the lowly, sinful, hurt, and broken?

Wasn’t it to draw near to sinners and heal them? *[pause]*

Why did He die on the Cross?

Wasn’t it so that sinners could find grace through Him, and be reconciled with God? *[pauseeee]*

Jesus doesn’t say, “Get your life together, and then I’ll come to you.”

He says, “In all of your sin, brokenness, and failure, I will come to you, and reach out my hand in extravagant mercy, but will you turn from your sin and trust Me?” *[pauseeee]*

Let me tell you, the Great Commission is not for people who have picture-perfect lives, all put together. *[pause]*

These original 11 disciples didn't have their lives put together, all in a nice, little neat package, for they had just failed Jesus miserably! *[pauseeee]*

Do not think that because you don't have your life like so-and-so that you are counted out from participating in the mission of Christ. *[pause]*

This mission is not for all those who are worthy, for none of us is worthy!

The mission is for sinners, who have experienced the grace of Christ! *[pauseeee]*

I know there are some of you this morning that think, "Make disciples? Me? I don't feel qualified for that, just look at my past!" *[pause]*

Well just look at the disciples' past, and marvel that Jesus wanted to use them! *[pauseeee]*

Jesus wants to use us despite our past sin failures. *[pause]*

We each have our own list of past sins, but know that there is forgiveness in Christ, and that those things don't disqualify you from being used by Him. *[pause]*

As the well-known quote goes: "Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread."⁵ *[pause]*

To put it another way—we are sinners, who have experienced grace, who now go out and tell other sinners where to find grace. *[pauseeee]*

Now how does He do this? *[pause]*

He restores us after failure. *[pause]*

Peter was restored, as well as the other disciples, who had fled. *[pause]*

Of course, to be restored, we have to be repentant.

So we must acknowledge and repent of our sins, but He then loves to forgive and restore sinners, and use them for His great purposes. *[pauseeee]*

Therefore, do not think, "I'm too far gone. Just look at what I've done in the past."

No, Jesus doesn't consider you a lost cause, and discard you to the bin.

Instead, He wants to use people such as us, warts and all. *[pauseeee]*

⁵ This quote is most likely from D.T. Niles, though there is some question as to who originally said it.

He used Abraham, who lied about his wife to Pharaoh.⁶ *[pause]*

He used Samson, who had many, many issues. *[pause]*

Think of David's sins, and yet God still used Him. *[pause]*

Just think of Paul's past sins as he persecuted the church, and yet he was used mightily by God. *[pause]*

Think of person after person in the Bible, and their sins, and yet God desired to use them despite those things. *[pauseeee]*

Now for us, we may sometimes use someone who has failed us, for we think, "OK, I guess I'll give them another chance."

But we typically don't get close to someone like that, for we kind of keep our distance, for we don't want to get hurt. *[pause]*

Yet what's amazing with Jesus is that He calls these disciples his brothers! *[pause]*

Back in verse 10 of Matthew 28, Jesus said for Mary to, "go and tell *my brothers* to go to Galilee." *[pausee]*

He wasn't ashamed of calling them "brothers"!

He didn't shy away from being closely identified with them, and desiring a close relationship.

Rather, He was willing to call people, who had failed Him, "brothers"! *[pauseeee]*

Isn't the mercy and grace of Jesus so amazing?! *[pause]*

He could have kept His distance from us...

He could have just considered us acquaintances or simply servants...

Rather, He considers us brothers and sisters! *[pause]*

Though we have sinned against Him and failed Him many times, He draws near to us and calls us brothers and sisters, desiring to use us. *[pauseeee]*

Christ works through imperfect people with messed up pasts. *[pause]*

Many times we think, "How could I be used? Just look at my past!"

But when we do that, we are acting like Jesus is just like us, but He's not just like us, and praise Him that He's not! *[pause]*

⁶ Genesis 12:18.

He is overflowing with grace and mercy, and gives us chance after chance after chance.

[pauseeee]

The disciples' past failures didn't disqualify them, but Jesus called them "brothers", drew near to them, and restored them to service.

This is the heart of Christ for sinners—this is how He works. *[pauseeee]*

He desires to use *you* amidst all of your past sins and failures.

But will you push Him away, or bow the knee in gratitude and joy and service? *[pauseeee]*

As I was thinking about how Jesus uses these disciples (and us) in His great mission in the world...

...Something that I realized was that Jesus doesn't just use us despite our *past* failures, but He even uses us despite our *future* failures. *[pause]*

Peter had denied Christ, and yet was called by the Lord to make disciples.

And this same Peter is the one who would be called out by Paul in front of everyone for fearing the Jews, and withdrawing from eating with the Gentiles later on in His ministry.⁷ *[pauseeee]*

Though Jesus knew this future failure, Peter was still used by Him to do great things! *[pauseee]*

Jesus has called disciples to the Great Commission, even though He knew all about people like the Galatians, who were being led away after another gospel. *[pause]*

He knew all about people like the Corinthians who had a whole long list of problems.

And He knows all about your future failures, too. *[pauseeee]*

Though He knows all of this, He still desires to use us, as we simply cling to Him. *[pause]*

He's not looking for perfect candidates, just repentant, submissive ones. *[pauseeee]*

Do not allow your failures to prevent you from joining in on His amazing mission of making disciples.

He wants to use YOU. *[pause]*

Flaws and all, messy past and rugged future and all, He wants you to play a part in His glorious, eternity-shaping mission in the world.

And you never know what God could use for His kingdom! *[pauseeee]*

I once saw a man who had a *very* rough past. *[pause]*

⁷ See Galatians 2:11–14.

He was in jail at one point, his body was covered in tattoos, and he was rough around the edges.

But God miraculously saved him, and now the guy was on fire for the Lord, winning lost souls to Christ, and seeking to teach them more about Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

As I thought about that guy, I thought, “You know what, that guy is really just a picture of each of us, and how we should be.” *[pause]*

Each of us have messy pasts, we each have our own sets of weaknesses and failures, but that’s who God uses!

He uses *redeemed sinners*, who He miraculously transforms out of grace and then sends us out into the world to reach other sinners! *[pauseeeee]*

Now what’s mind-blowing is that we haven’t even covered every failure or problem of the disciples in this passage yet. *[pause]*

Look at verse 17, where it says, “And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.” *[pauseee]*

What’s with that? *[pause]*

Why are they doubting? *[pause]*

I mean they are looking at the risen Christ, and are about to be commissioned by Him, and yet some of them doubt? *[pause]*

What’s going on here? *[pauseeeee]*

Well it’s important to note what this word ‘doubt’ means. *[pause]*

It does NOT mean that some of the disciples had hard-hearted unbelief.

That’s not what the word here means. *[pause]*

Rather, this word points to *hesitant belief*. *[pause]*

It’s the same word used of Peter after he sinks while walking on the water.

Jesus says to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”⁸ *[pause]*

It’s this idea of being hesitant or wavering.

It does not signal *no* faith, but as Jesus said, Peter had *little* faith. *[pauseeee]*

Apparently, some of the disciples were hesitant when Jesus appeared to them, and this is probably because some of them were wondering if this was really Jesus.

⁸ Matthew 14:31.

And they might have been confused about what this all means, and so not fully giving themselves over yet to complete faith and worship. *[pauseeee]*

This is parallel to all of the other gospels, which each describe at least some of the disciples doubting after the resurrection. *[pause]*

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus rebukes their doubt.⁹ *[pause]*

In Luke, the disciples doubt, but then over time Jesus leads them to firm belief.¹⁰ *[pause]*

And then in John, Thomas doubts, but is led to faith.¹¹ *[pauseeee]*

“Little faith” and not “getting it” are what characterized the disciples, and here they are even after the resurrection and still some of them are not fully “all-in”. *[pause]*

But what’s significant is that Jesus doesn’t bring down the hammer, condemn them, and vow to never use them again.

Rather, He moves them along to confident trust, and that’s what happens in some of the gospel accounts that I just shared. *[pauseeee]*

The important thing is that their doubts didn’t remain as doubts!

Jesus led them to firm faith, and that’s what He wants to do in us whenever doubts pop up in our minds. *[pause]*

We are slow learners, just like the disciples, and so we need to keep going to Him, and let Him lead us along the path of firmer faith. *[pauseeee]*

As you live, some doubts and hesitations may arise in your mind.

But do not think that just the presence of those doubts mean that Jesus is done with you.

Rather, know that He wants to move you along to more confident trust, so that you can boldly declare His name. *[pauseeee]*

Even the disciples’ “little faith” didn’t prevent Jesus from wanting to use them. *[pause]*

It was not a deal-breaker, but it was something that He used in their lives to move them along, and the evidence for His work is seen in their faith-filled actions in the book of Acts. *[pauseeee]*

As I like to say, we are all works-in-progress.

And thank the Lord that He doesn’t discard us for being works-in-progress, but rather, that’s the kind of people He uses. *[pause]*

⁹ Mark 16:14.

¹⁰ Luke 24:36–49.

¹¹ See John 20:24–29.

We saw here in this text that...

Jesus uses imperfect disciples for His great mission in the world!

Some people think that Jesus uses only perfect people, who have their lives all buttoned up and put together.

Like that clean-cut man or woman, who seems to have it all together. [pause]

I've even heard people say that they will start going to church or serving once they have their life in a better place.

But they are neglecting the truth that Jesus uses imperfect people with messed up pasts and flawed futures. [pause]

Why does He do this?

Well first, because we all fit into that category, and there's no exceptions.

We all have our own set of flaws, sins, weaknesses, failures, pasts, etc. [pause]

But also, He uses people like this so that amidst our imperfections, His amazing perfections would shine forth. [pause]

That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."¹² *[pause]*

He uses frail, weak, ordinary people like us to show off His glorious power! [pause]

He wants to use 'little us' for His big work. [pause]

He wants to use flawed us to spread His flawless gospel. [pause]

And He wants to take us, mere grace-saved disciples, to go out and make disciples for His name and glory. [pause]

To think that Jesus knows all about you...

He's fully aware of your marred past, He knows your present struggles, and He sees your future failings with perfect vision.

And yet He doesn't turn away in disgust, He doesn't walk away and say, "I'm not using him! I'm not using her!" [pause]

Rather, knowing all of that, despite all of your sins, failures, and weaknesses, Christ wants to use YOU in His mission in the world!

¹² 2 Corinthians 4:7.

So what's holding you back? *[pause]*

I want you to pause and reflect upon your heart right now. *[pause]*

Take a moment to take a deep breath, close your eyes if you need to, put away distractions out of your mind, and simply evaluate your heart. *[pauseeee]*

What are the hesitations of your heart that are holding you back from stepping up and being used by Jesus to disciple and serve others? *[pause]*

Maybe you think, "I don't have things together and just look at my past, how could I help someone else?" *[pause]*

Maybe you think, "I don't feel qualified or gifted, and I don't know all the answers." *[pause]*

Or maybe it's a hesitancy because it would be stepping outside of your comfort zone, and you haven't really done that before when it comes to serving Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Know that Jesus uses imperfect disciples, despite all of their failures and flaws, and desires to use people such as you. *[pauseee]*

Know that He wants to take you where you are, lead you along into more confident trust, and use you for His glory in this world. *[pauseeee]*

He wants to use YOU in His mission in the world to make disciples, and help grow others, and serve others. *[pauseeee]*

We will be talking more about what this mission entails and all of that, but for today, I want to start at the foundation. *[pause]*

I want you to strip away all of those hesitations and doubts about Jesus using you because of this or that, and just consider that He *wants* to use you in His grand mission.

But are you willing? *[pause]*

Will you lay down those hesitancies, doubts, or excuses and be willing to say to the Lord...

"I have many failures in my past, I've felt hesitant, and I'm afraid of failing in the future, but Lord, I want to be used by You in your great mission in the world." *[pauseeeee]*

To think that Jesus uses people such as us for His great, grand mission is astonishing, isn't it? *[pause]*

All we can say is, "Who, me?" for we are definitely not worthy in ourselves to be used by Christ, yet in grace, He desires to use us.