

Matthew 28:18 | “Sent by the Highest Authority”
Preached on August 25, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 28, verse 18. *[pauseee]*

We are in the midst of multiple weeks of looking at the Great Commission. [pause]

Last week, we saw who Jesus uses and calls to serve in His mission in the world, and it’s not perfect people, but imperfect disciples. *[pause]*

It’s us—full of messy pasts, present struggles, and flawed futures.

Yet He wants to use us in His grand mission in the world. *[pauseeee]*

Now, we are going to be looking at the basis for the Great Commission and it’s the authority of Jesus. [pauseee]

We will be zeroing in on Matthew 28:18 today, but let’s read verses 18–20 to get the whole Great Commission on our minds. *[READ]*

This story is told by Frank Koch in the magazine of the Naval Institute. [pause]

He says, “Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. *[pause]*

I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. [pause]

The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities. *[pause]*

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, ‘Light, bearing on the starboard bow.’ [pause]

‘Is it steady or moving astern?’ the captain called out. *[pause]*

The lookout replied, ‘Steady, Captain,’ which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship. [pause]

The captain then called to the signalman, ‘Signal that ship: ‘We are on a collision course, advise you change course twenty degrees.’ *[pause]*

Back came the signal, ‘Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees.’ [pause]

The captain said, ‘Send: ‘I’m a captain, change course twenty degrees.’ *[pause]*

‘I’m a seaman second-class,’ came the reply. ‘*You had better change course twenty degrees.’ [pause]*

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, ‘Send: ‘I’m a battleship. Change course twenty degrees.’” *[pause]*

Back came the flashing light, ‘I’m a lighthouse.’”¹ *[pause]*

Needless to say, they changed course after hearing that. *[pauseeee]*

Many times in life, there is a battle over who has the higher authority, but this morning we are going to learn about who has the *highest* authority.

And it’s He who calls us to an all-important mission—Jesus Christ. *[pauseeee]*

As we think about this verse 18, we must remember all that came before it. *[pause]*

Jesus had a unique birth, as He was born of a virgin, and then God made some amazing declarations of who He would be...

He would save His people from their sins, and would be called “Immanuel (which means, God with us).”² *[pause]*

He was even seen as the King of the Jews, as the wise men sought Him out, while Herod tried to kill Him.³ *[pause]*

God called Him His beloved Son at His baptism, and Jesus showed His identity by His perfect resistance to Satan’s temptations, His amazing miracles, authoritative teachings, and sinless life. *[pause]*

But not everyone followed or liked Jesus, for the religious leaders couldn’t stand Him and opposed Him at every turn.

And eventually Jesus was put to death, but it was all according to God’s plan, for He died to save sinners. *[pause]*

Then astoundingly, He rose again 3 days later, being vindicated and shown to be who He said He was. *[pauseeee]*

After all of that, He now stands before His disciples as the great risen Christ, who would soon ascend into Heaven, but He gives the Great Commission before He goes.

And what we will study this morning is the foundation of that command to make disciples, and it’s found in verse 18, where Jesus says...

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” *[pauseeee]*

¹ Max Lucado, *In the Eye of the Storm*, Word Publishing, 1991, p. 153. Found at: <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/a/authority.htm>

² See Matthew 1:21–23.

³ See Matthew 2.

What a statement! *[pause]*

Sometimes we become so accustomed to certain Bible verses that we just read them over without really thinking deeply about the significance and meaning of them.

But really, this verse is showing us that...

I. Christ has all authority over everything.

Just think about what Jesus said here. *[pause]*

Jesus said that He has authority.

But not only that, He has *all* authority.

And that's not all, for He has all authority in heaven and earth. [pause]

Really think about that! *[pauseeee]*

Let's start at the basics: authority. [pause]

To have authority is to have a certain superior position and right to do certain things.

So if I said that I had authority over my toolbox, I'd be saying that I have a certain position—I am ruler of my toolbox. [pause]

Now with being the ruler of my toolbox, it means that I have certain rights in regards to that toolbox...

I can discard old tools, buy new ones, let other people borrow tools, or use them as I see fit. [pause]

So not only do I have the rights to oversee and determine how those tools are used, but I have the power to function in that authority. *[pause]*

If someone comes to my toolbox, I have the power to say "Yes, you can borrow that tool." [pauseeee]

So think of authority here as the position, right, and power over something.

And Jesus is saying that He has authority. [pause]

He is a ruler, who has a high up position, the power of that position, and all the rights that come along with that position. *[pauseeee]*

Now sometimes you can have authority, but it's limited authority. [pause]

For a time, I worked at a community college, and I was the one who oversaw and was the leader of the custodians. *[pause]*

Now I had some authority in that role, but my role over the custodians was limited. *[pause]*

I could try to resolve disputes, instruct people where to go and what to do, and things like that, but my authority was limited because I couldn't hire or fire any employees. *[pause]*

I did not have *all* authority over the custodians.

Yet Jesus says that He has "all authority". *[pause]*

His authority is not limited, but it's absolute.

He doesn't have to say, "Oh, I don't have authority over that," or, "Hold on, let me go ask someone who is over that," for He has all authority. *[pauseeee]*

Notice also the *realms* that He's over. *[pause]*

Using the previous illustration, I had certain authority over the custodians, but I didn't have authority over the maintenance workers, secretaries, teachers, or administrators.

But look at the realms that Jesus is over: heaven and earth! *[pause]*

What else is left out?

Nothing! For He's over *everything!* *[pauseeee]*

"When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. *[pause]*

One day, after a busy morning chasing votes (and no lunch) he arrived at a church barbecue. *[pause]*

It was late afternoon and Herter was famished. *[pause]*

As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken.

So she put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line. *[pause]*

'Excuse me,' Governor Herter said, 'do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?' *[pause]*

'Sorry,' the woman told him. 'I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person.' *[pause]*

'But I'm starved,' the governor said. *[pause]*

'Sorry,' the woman said again. 'Only one to a customer.' *[pause]*

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around. *[pause]*

'Do you know who I am?' he said. 'I am the governor of this state.' *[pause]*

‘Do you know who I am?’ the woman said. ‘I’m the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister.’⁴ *[pauseeeee]*

You see, that governor had authority, but his authority wasn’t over *everything*, and it obviously wasn’t over the chicken.

So likewise, it matters to what extent your authority goes. *[pause]*

Just because you are a boss in one company doesn’t mean that you can walk into any random company and start giving orders.

Everyone would look at you like you are crazy. *[pause]*

Yet for Jesus, He tells us that His authority is over heaven and earth. *[pause]*

To be over earth is one thing, but to say that you are over heaven, too, shows that you are one who has divine status. *[pause]*

Jesus is Lord of Heaven and Earth, which throughout the Bible was a title attributed to God the Father,⁵ and it just goes to show that He is truly God. *[pauseee]*

Jesus is not over a little region, and that’s it. *[pause]*

He’s not over a small group of people.

He’s not even *only* over the church, but heaven and earth. *[pauseee]*

He rules over as far as you could possibly travel in a lifetime, and miles upon miles beyond it. *[pause]*

He rules over every single place that you can and cannot see—over every single thing that you don’t even know about. *[pauseeeee]*

Look around you: He’s over that. *[pause]*

Search high and low, you won’t find anything outside of His domain.

He is the Ruler, Lord, and King of the Universe and as well the Spirit Realm. *[pauseeeee]*

Many people view Jesus as this weak, timid, powerless guy, but as the risen Christ, He is Lord, who everyone must bow down to. *[pauseee]*

Others view Jesus as over spiritual or religious matters, but try to act like He has no say in anything else.

⁴ *Bits & Pieces*, May 28, 1992, pp. 5-6. Found at: <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/a/authority.htm>.

⁵ See Genesis 24:3, Matthew 11:25, & Acts 17:24.

Or some people think that He has authority over a small snippet or area of their life, but the other areas, they get to rule.

But listen up: if Jesus has all authority over heaven and earth, then He has all authority over government, politics, and policies. *[pause]*

If Jesus has all authority over heaven and earth, then He has all authority over how you act at your workplace, over your time, money, possessions, and priorities.

There is nothing outside of the authority and Lordship of Christ! *[paueeese]*

He has authority over all plants and animals, weather, diseases, and objects. *[pause]*

He has authority over all demons and angels, world leaders and governing bodies. *[pause]*

He's over every individual, family, town, state, region, nation, and the whole world. *[pause]*

He has authority over our bodies and over every single soul who lives or who will ever live. *[pauseeee]*

You cannot escape His domain by going into outer space, He rules there. *[pause]*

Not even the unseen realm is unseen to Him, but He sees them and rules them there, too. *[pauseeee]*

Everyone and everything is under Him and is accountable to Him, the King of kings and Lord of lords. *[pauseeeee]*

He has the right and power over everything to do whatever He wants to do with any of it!

This is Jesus Christ! *[pauseeee]*

Do not act like He is some timid pushover, who you can accept or reject, depending on what you feel. *[pause]*

Do not act like His rule is optional, where there are no consequences for rejecting this King. *[pauseeeee]*

All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him by God the Father—now that's a lofty assertion! *[pause]*

Who is He to make such a claim?

Because the Father has given to Him this authority. *[pauseeee]*

After His resurrection, Jesus was no longer the weak, suffering One, but the triumphant, authoritative One, who He has always been in eternity past. *[pause]*

His resurrection vindicated all that He said, and it publically and powerfully showed that He is truly the Son of God and Messiah.⁶ *[pause]*

God the Father has given the stamp of approval upon Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, who is given as Daniel 7 says...

Dominion, glory, and a kingdom “that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.”⁷ *[pause]*

Without a doubt, “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,”⁸ and “[He is] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.”⁹ *[pauseeee]*

We must realize that Jesus Christ is Ruler now and has authority even now. *[pause]*

We all should bow to Him, submit to Him, serve Him, worship Him, and place everything under His Lordship.

But we also know that His authority that He has now will be *fully* displayed and exercised in the end when He returns, and sits on His glorious throne.¹⁰ *[pauseeee]*

Christ has all authority over everything. *[pause]*

Let that truth marinate in your mind and heart for a while, and the more you think and dwell upon it, it only astonishes and astounds all the more. *[pauseeee]*

It's this authoritative One who sends us on a mission, and that's what I want to talk about next...

II. Christ sends us on a mission by His authority.

Being Americans, we are not used to being under a sovereign king in our country, for in our country, we function under elected representatives, who are governed by the constitution.

But for the time right now, we need to transport ourselves back in time to where there were sovereign kings, who held ultimate authority in the land. *[pause]*

Now go there in your mind, and imagine that the king called you into his throne room. *[pause]*

As you walked in the throne room, you looked around and saw all of the magnificence of his throne, throne room, and even the glory of his kingly scepter and dress. *[pause]*

It was an amazing sight to behold and a high privilege to be called to appear before this king, for this was the high king of the land. *[pause]*

⁶ A reference to Romans 1:4.

⁷ Daniel 7:14. (See also Psalm 2:8!)

⁸ Philippians 2:9.

⁹ Ephesians 1:21.

¹⁰ A reference to Matthew 25:31.

Now imagine that this king said to you, “I am king over all the lands. I have authority over all of it. I rule over it and show my power over it all.

And now in light of that, I have a task for you to do under my sovereign authority.” *[pauseeee]*

What are some of the emotions that you would feel? *[pause]*

Wouldn’t you feel utterly privileged and honored to do this special task for the king? *[pause]*

Wouldn’t you also realize the importance and duty of doing this task, for the king commanded you to do it? *[pauseeee]*

Now let’s say that your task was to go out into the kingdom and tell people that they must do something in obedience to the king. *[pause]*

Would you be lackadaisical about that? *[pause]*

Would you go wondering if you had the right to do this? *[pause]*

Would you go timidly to the people? *[pause]*

Would you tell the people, “If you don’t want to do this, that’s fine.”?

No way! For the king has commanded you and tasked you to go, under his authority, to do this task. *[pause]*

So also, we must realize that in an even greater way, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, who has all authority over all, has commissioned *us* to a task. *[pauseee]*

Why do we act like what He has called us to is optional? *[pause]*

Why do we act like we haven’t been called by the all-authoritative One Himself? *[pause]*

Why are we not utterly astonished by the privilege of this honor?

For it’s true—we have been sent on a mission by the One who has all authority over everything.

And it matters *who* sends you to do something! *[pauseee]*

That’s why right after verse 18, it says, “Go *therefore* and make disciples.” *[pause]*

On the basis of His authority, we are commanded to make disciples. *[pauseeee]*

Now let’s take some time to think about the implications of being sent on a mission by the highest authority, Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

First, being sent on mission by the authority of Jesus Christ means that we have a *big responsibility*. *[pauseee]*

If Jesus tells us to make disciples, it's a command, not a suggestion. *[pause]*

It is not optional, and we must realize that. *[pause]*

His words are given as imperatives, instructing and commanding us to go and make disciples.

So to ignore this command is to be in disobedience to the King, who has tasked us with this mission, and that's a big deal. *[pause]*

I mean He is the Ruler over both Heaven and Earth, and we think that we can just neglect what He has told us to do?

Therefore, we must realize the big responsibility that we have. *[pause]*

We must not take it lightly, for we must remember *who* sent us. *[pauseeee]*

Some think that if they don't have the gift of evangelism, or the gift of teaching, or this or that gift, then it's OK if they don't make disciples, but that's not true.

Jesus gave this command to be done by all of His disciples. *[pauseeee]*

So let me ask you this question to ponder in your heart...

Do you think, "Making disciples is *my* responsibility because Jesus has told me to do it"? *[pause]*

I find that most modern day Christians do not think this way, and it's not good, for this is a prime command that Jesus has given to us!

And I believe that a part of the reason why the church in America today is in the place that it is is because we have lost sight of seeing disciple-making as one of our highest responsibilities. *[pauseeeee]*

You must each think, "*I* am responsible for making disciples of Jesus Christ." *[pause]*

It's not just the pastors, the evangelists, the leaders, or especially gifted people who are called to do this, but each of us.

And that means that our mission is of utmost importance! *[pauseeee]*

What we are to do is not to just go through the motions of religion for religion's sake, just to say we did it or feel better about ourselves. *[pause]*

No, we serve Someone, we follow Someone, we proclaim Someone, and we call others to serve, follow, and proclaim Him. *[pause]*

So we are not here for talking about our preferences, for declaring our opinions, or for going through the motions...

We are here to make disciples, so we dare not neglect it. *[pauseeee]*

Not only does being sent on mission by the authority of Jesus Christ mean that we have a big responsibility, but it also means that we have a *big purpose*. *[pausee]*

When you see Jesus' command to make disciples in light of His cosmic authority, it demonstrates that we have such a big purpose. *[pause]*

Many Christians feel like they have a low calling or a small purpose, or they often feel purposeless. *[pause]*

They think, "What I'm doing is so small, menial, and miniscule."

And they think, "What difference does my life make in the world?"

But when you think that the Lord of Heaven and Earth has called you to a task, it shatters those thoughts into a million pieces, and replaces it with amazing purpose. *[pauseeee]*

I. Have. Purpose! *[pause]*

I have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for me, but that's not all, for I have been sent by Him on a mission!

What a privilege! *[pause]*

We have been personally sent and commissioned by the all-authoritative One!

We are His authorized ambassadors and representatives.

We go in His name, sent by His command, and under His authority to spread His rule over all the earth by making more and more disciples of Him. *[pauseeee]*

One of the reasons why we may not be more mission-minded is that we neglect to remember that we have a big purpose in life...

We have been sent by the all-authoritative One to make disciples of Him for His glory. *[pause]*

What greater purpose could we have in life than to serve the King of kings? *[pause]*

What greater purpose could we have to give glory to the One who made us, and redeemed us, and commissioned us? *[pauseeee]*

Do not believe the world when it tries to say that we are bumbling bigots. *[pause]*

Do not be influenced by how they think of us, for we are ambassadors of the King of all. *[pause]*

We have been sent by the Sovereign of the universe to call people to bow and follow Him in faith, and if they do not, they will face His wrath when He returns. *[pauseeee]*

It's not optional, like, "Oh, I don't want them to be upset." *[pause]*

Or, "Maybe if you'd like to accept Jesus, that would be cool, but I know we all have our own beliefs."

No, it has been commanded by our Sovereign Lord and the King of the Cosmos.

So we don't say, "Well, if you want to," but we boldly declare, "Repent and be saved!"
[pauseeee]

Being sent on mission by the authority of Christ means that we have a big responsibility, a big purpose, and thirdly, it means that we can have *big confidence*. *[pauseee]*

Since Jesus has all authority over everything, then we can openly and boldly declare Him.

That's what the disciples did in the book of Acts. *[pause]*

How could we not be confident in the Lord?

The One who is over all has sent us! *[pauseeee]*

The higher in rank of the person who sends you, the more confidence you have going to do something on their behalf. *[pause]*

If someone off the street points at a building and tells you that you are allowed to go into the building and grab anything out of it for free, you may go, but you would be nervous that they were misleading you. *[pause]*

But if the owner of the building comes up to you and says, "You can go into my building and grab anything you want. Here I will even give you something to prove that I said you could."
[pause]

Now *that* would give you total confidence to walk in and grab something. *[pauseeee]*

We have a mission from the all-authoritative One, so there should be no lack of confidence in what we are called to do.

And our confidence should also be in the fact that this mission will not fail. *[pauseeee]*

Since our task has the backing and power of Christ Himself behind it, then why fret? *[pause]*

He has called us to this, and God does not do things that fail, for He doesn't fail. *[pauseeee]*

So often we serve God, but do so in *unconfident* ways. *[pause]*

We fret that it will not work out in the end. *[pause]*

We fear how others will respond.

We consider this task optional, unimportant, or not urgent. *[pause]*

We are apprehensive and shrink back sometimes. *[pause]*

We act too timidly and passively when it comes to talking about Christ to others, but we should have great confidence, for the highest authority has sent us on this mission. *[pauseeee]*

Since Jesus, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, has commissioned us to make disciples, then do you realize that we have the authority and right to do it from the highest authority Himself?
[pauseeee]

Some people say, “What gives you the right to try to convert people?” *[pause]*

I’ve even heard of people who get upset at missionaries and say, “What right do they have to go to another culture and tell people to trust in Jesus alone and no longer follow their own gods?”
[pause]

Well we have the right and authority to do this because Jesus told us to do it, and He has all authority over heaven and earth!

So we don’t shy away or apologize, for we have this right, according to the One who is over all.
[pause]

As one commentator said, “Whenever we speak of Christ, we are within our rights.”¹¹ *[pauseeee]*

Now just because we can have great confidence since the mission is backed by Christ, will not fail, and all that, doesn’t mean that there will be no opposition. *[pause]*

In fact, not long before this commission, you have the religious leaders lying to the people about Jesus’ resurrection.

And then in the book of Acts, the opposition is strong against the disciples and their mission.
[pause]

So just because we can have confidence in our authorized mission doesn’t mean we won’t face animosity.

Yet amidst all of that, we can go in the confidence of the Lord...

...Knowing that He calls us to do this, His purposes won’t fail, and it will be worth it in the end, no matter what hostility may come. *[pauseeeee]*

In summary, we see that...

We have been called to make disciples by the authority of Jesus Christ!

¹¹ Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 532.

Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth—what a statement, what a truth! *[pause]*

And now: in, under, and by His authority, He calls us to make disciples. *[pause]*

Are you doing so?

If not, what's holding you back? *[pause]*

He has sent you, but will you go? *[pause]*

He has authorized you to go, but will you go boldly? *[pauseeee]*

As you think about what Jesus has called us to: who are we that we get to participate in such a grand mission? *[pause]*

Who are we that we get the privilege, honor, and responsibility to be sent and authorized by the Lord of all? *[pause]*

We were sinners and rebels of God, living in bondage to sin, and alienated from God.

But in grace, because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us, we have been forgiven, redeemed, saved, and given purpose. *[pausee]*

It was not our works that saved us, but by grace through faith alone, we have trusted in Him, who is both Savior and Lord. *[pausee]*

We are not worthy in ourselves to be called and commissioned, yet He chose to graciously save us and use us for His big purpose in the world.

And there's no more worthy than Christ, who calls us and commissions us with a big responsibility, yet we can go with big confidence in the Lord, knowing who sent us...

...The one who has all authority over heaven and earth.