

Date : 30th November 2025
Theme : Servanthood in Mark's Gospel
Topic : The Great Commission.
Key passage : Mark 16:14-20
Key verse : *And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. Mark 16:20 nkjv*

Introduction

In *Mark 16:15*, Jesus gave a command to His 11 disciples on the day of His resurrection.
...Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation Mark 16:15.

The circumstances under which the disciples were commissioned

- Why is there an irony in this command of Jesus?
 Jesus commissioned His disciples immediately after rebuking them for their unbelief and hardness of heart regarding His resurrection.
 - The mission's scope
 This scope of Jesus' mission contrasted greatly with the sad state of mind of His disciples. The disciples' unbelief was clearly seen when the woman testified regarding having seen the Lord. They were mourning and weeping like people without hope.
 - Disciples' state
 Despite having been told repeatedly by their Master in *Mark 8:31, 9:12, 31-32, 10:33-34, 45* to anticipate His resurrection, they had refused to believe the eye-witness accounts of Mary Magdalene and 2 other disciples about seeing the risen Christ. Jesus confronted the emotional paralysis created by their fears, doubts and confusion about the Resurrection.
- What did Jesus do?
He...rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart...Mark 16:14.
- Did Jesus' rebuke show a lack of sympathy or disregard for His disciples' feelings of inadequacy? Why didn't He show greater understanding?
 - From our human perspective which values individual liberty, we regard their unbelief as something not serious enough to warrant rebuke.
 - Consider the relationship the disciples had with Jesus.
 His disciples had been *with Him* for 3 years. *Mark 3:14*
 Jesus' goal to them was clear: *Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. Mark 1:17*

In this Master-disciple relationship:

- It was considered a duty, rooted in *Leviticus 19:17*, to encourage and correct. As Teacher and spiritual leader, He rebuked when necessary.
- In this case, it was necessary because without choosing faith, they would not be able to fulfil the Great Commission.

(This ethics of rebuke did not apply to the stranger. *Leviticus 19:34*)

- But despite the fact that they were all weak in faith, the Lord still commissioned them into service. If this was so and since we are all weak in faith, could He not do the same for us?
- How did the Great Commission challenge the disciples' fear of inadequacy?

By commanding His disciples to fulfil the Great Commission, the Lord was causing them to:

- Shift their focus from their personal inadequacy to dependence on God's power, not theirs.
- Impart vision, a global vision, God's vision.

- Moved from despair to faith in God's great power.

It takes faith to accomplish God's vision. He promised to work powerfully as we work. It is His grace that empowers us.

1. What is the Great Commission?

- a. It is the command from the resurrected Christ for His followers to take the good news to all the world. The core task, to make disciples, is by teaching them to obey His commands and baptising them.

Go and make disciples is a clear command for followers of Jesus to act upon.

- b. It is God's vision for His people; a vision that is way out of the scale of our thinking. God wants us to enlarge our vision. We may not be able to take responsibility for a scale of such a magnitude, but God can. We are not trying to accomplish something that is beyond ourselves. We are trying to stretch our vision beyond our little world where things revolve only around ourselves.
- c. It is God's desire for all — that none should perish but that all mankind will repent. Adopting God's desire enlarges our perspective in life. He is sharing His heartbeat, so that it is not about what we can do.
- d. It is God's specific assignment to us — preach the good news. Preaching means to declare, to share, to show by lip and life.
- e. It is God's message of good news. It brings a benefit for those who will receive it and also a warning of the consequences if rejected.
...He who believes will be saved but he who does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16

2. The command of the Great Commission comes with the promise. *Mark 16:15*

- a. To use the authority of Jesus, the most powerful Name above all names.
- b. Cast out demons, heal the sick, prayer language and speaking in new tongues, will accompany our preaching, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- c. Jesus' presence will accompany our preaching.
 - Testimony of pioneer preachers when they preached everywhere
 - The Lord working with them as they preached. *Mark 16:20*
 - Confirming their message by supernatural signs.
 - Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father.
What's He doing? Interceding for our success.

3. How often did the Lord repeat the Great Commission to His disciples?

Repeated with unique nuances in all 4 Gospels and in Acts, its emphasis is to ensure that disciples of Jesus do not miss the importance of this command of our Lord.

- i) When He commissioned His 11 disciples on a Galilean mountain
He promised His authority....*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me...go and make disciples...baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you... Matthew 28:18-20*

- ii) When He blessed His disciples on the day of His Ascension, near Bethany.
*...The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day...
You are witnesses of these things... Luke 24:48*

The Great Commission, given on His Ascension, is also recorded in Acts of the Apostles.
He prefaced His command with the promise
...But you shall receive power... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth... Acts 1:8

- iii) When He met His mourning disciples privately in Jerusalem on the day of His resurrection, as they were eating a meal in hiding.
...Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation... Mark 16:15
- iv) The Great Commission, given to the Markan gathering, repeated in John's Gospel.
...Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you. John 20:21

Application:

How uncomfortable was it for the early disciples to obey the Great Commission?

- a. The Gentile world was not on their agenda.
Going to the Gentile world (Samaria, ends of the earth) was not part of the Jewish thinking.
The Jews hated Samaritans. So what did the disciples do?

- They hung out in Jerusalem until they were scattered by the great persecution.

Application: Is there someone I hesitate to speak to about the gospel?

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- b. They were emotionally wrecked, mourning and weeping in despair.
But they overcame this emotional crisis.

Application: Sometimes I am not be in an emotional state of mind to share the gospel,
but I am willing to tap into the Holy Spirit's power.

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- c. They lost their purpose initially.
- The Lord's purpose was to make them fishers of men. Yet many of them returned to their former occupation fishing. It was only after Jesus' repeated appearances that the disciples' hope was restored and they eventually became the agents of changing the world.

Application: Instead of being distracted by worldly pursuits, I want to fulfil God's purpose

- preach the good news.
- by faith, experience God working with me in signs and wonders.

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