

mp3/31/ARRON COOK, MATTHEW 28.MP3

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Date: 09 October 2011

Preacher: Arron Cook

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Pleasure to see you again. Let's begin by praying. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the privilege it is to gather together this morning in the knowledge that the heavenly company is very interested in what is happening here in our little company this morning.

Thank you so much for all the grace and mercy that we've received because of Jesus. And we're very pleased to be meeting together this morning to remember him and listen to him and sit at his feet, have him instruct us. And we pray that by your spirit you would give us teachable hearts and open minds. Lord, if anything I say is displeasing to you, may it be struck from our memories as quickly as it was spoken. And if anything I say has come from you, may it find a home in our hearts. Please teach us then together this morning.

Open our eyes. We may behold wondrous things out of your word. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. If you do have a Bible, please open it. Turn it to Matthew chapter 28. We're going to be looking at verse 16 to 20 in particular, but I do think the whole context is relevant. It always is.

So, okay, well, it's a privilege to be with you again this morning. I bring love and greetings from your family at Dewsbury. We think of you often and pray for you. One or two, of course, have been nearby before and perhaps have had fellowship with us recently, but it is good to see you all again.

So we're going to be looking at this section in the Gospel of Matthew this morning. I personally have had the benefit of coming into the church from the world in the sense of I don't have any Christian heritage. There are no other Christians in my family and haven't been for hundreds of years.

[2 : 3 0] On my mother's side, there's a strong tradition of Roman Catholicism. And on my stepfather's side, there's kind of liberal Anglicanism for the past three or four generations. And before that, you know, nothing. And so I've had the advantage, I would say, of coming into the church and being able to look at it with fresher eyes, perhaps, than some people who grow up in a Christian environment. And not to, of course, say that that isn't a benefit or a blessing. It most certainly is. Many of my friends who grew up with that are very thankful for that experience and everything that has benefited them and the strength that that's provided for their faith. But I'm also thankful that I've come at it from a different place.

I do regret that coming into the community of the church, I did leave most of my appreciation for and understanding of the culture from which I've come behind me.

I felt like to truly be part of the church. I had to become separate from the world in a sense that I think the scripture doesn't encourage. Not to say there isn't a sense in which the scripture does encourage that. Perhaps that statement scares you. And perhaps that's a thought that's alien to you.

Sometimes scares me. And I often wonder in my own life sometimes if perhaps I'm not steering dangerously close to there being too much of the ocean of the world in the boat of my life than me floating atop the waves of it. But the reality is that whilst you can take the Christian out of the world, which to some degree I did when I first became a Christian, Martin Luther makes this interesting observation of how when somebody first becomes a Christian there is an initial period of extreme rejection of everything in the world. And then as they mature there is a gradual re-entry into its atmosphere, I think he puts it in his very taciturn, wordy way.

That certainly was my experience. There was an initial very volatile rejection of everything around me when I first became a Christian. But as I grew in the faith and grew in my understanding of the scripture and in my knowledge of our mission as Christians, there was a re-entry into being re-engaged with the world around me and seeking to understand it and serve those in the world by bringing them the message of the gospel. And I do think that we find ourselves as Christians in Britain with such a long and fantastic heritage behind us at a kind of crux now where we need to decide whether we're simply going to stand back and condemn the evil of our culture around us from our ivory tower with our sometimes our holier-than-thou almost pharisaism. I speak mostly to myself. I make no accusations.

[5 : 34] Or are we going to sit with the sinners as Jesus did? Are we going to engage with them, go to them? I think the days have passed that people come to see the gospel. I think we're in a time now where we must go and tell of the things that Christ has done. Some of my reflections in this message come from a book I've been reading by a person called Mark Driscoll. Some of you perhaps are already trembling at the mention of such a name. Don't worry. I certainly don't tick all of his boxes. I don't find myself in solid agreement with all of his principles. But certainly he's a Martin Luther of our day, is he not? In the locality that he finds himself in, a very secular environment. I think Seattle is the most unchurched city in America that he finds himself ministering in. And he's very engaged, perhaps too engaged sometimes with the culture around him. But I think there are certainly things to be learned from the way that he has sought to remain faithful to Christ whilst becoming relevant to the people around him. And I want us to look not so much at Mark Driscoll's words, but to gaze into some of the words of Jesus found in Matthew 28 this morning and try and draw out some of the things that Matthew very helpfully records for us at the beginning of what is referred to as the Great Commission. This mission that we have been sent on to reach all of the nations and tell them about Jesus. It's reasonably straightforward when you put it that way. But we have to remember the context in which we're reading this. This is the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew is an account of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ written in a way that it is particularly easy for Jews to read.

And so the Gospels are not simply designed for every kind of person to read, though certainly every kind of person can read them. When Matthew originally wrote his Gospel, very large swathes of very sound scholars would agree with me in saying that it was written primarily to a Jewish audience.

So it's written in such a way as a Jew would have very few stumbling blocks in coming to read it. So he uses lots of references to Old Testament prophecy. He talks about things that prophets long ago had said were going to happen and then records them happening in the life of Jesus. He uses Davidic imagery, often making references to David, things that David said. And perhaps there are even quite subtle ways in which he references this great king from Israel's history and likens and contrasts him with Jesus. And there are plenty of other Jewish features. Perhaps that's a lesson in itself.

But it's important to remember that that's the kind of context we're reading this final section of the Gospel in. So when Jesus is giving this commission, he is, I suppose, assuming a position of lordship over God's people by giving them this mission, this task to go and fulfil. We are, of course, in this section after the resurrection. The disciples have now seen the risen Christ. Certainly that would be a boon to their confidence. But perhaps they haven't quite fully grasped all of its implications yet.

We are before the day of Pentecost. When we read this, they're still without, in the full New Testament sense, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in quite the same way that you and I have it.

[9 : 25] But let's notice, firstly, that their mission begins with meeting Jesus. Verse 16. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them, and there they saw him. So Jesus had directed them that after he had been raised, which of course they paid very little attention to at the time, but he said to them after he had been raised that they were to go ahead and meet him in Galilee. The women, of course, earlier on in the chapter are told by the angel to go and get the other disciples and meet in Galilee because Jesus was going to go ahead of them and meet them there. So this is not an accidental or chance meeting. They didn't just wander past Christ in the street. It wasn't just that he was in Galilee and they happened to be in Galilee and they crossed paths. It was that Jesus had specifically said, go to Galilee and I will meet with you there. He wanted them to see and hear and know the full and awesome truth that he was indeed raised from the dead, thus proving all his claims to be true and exact. If Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead, the whole of the Christian faith falls flat on its face. That's why when scholars seek to attack the message of the Christian faith, it's the resurrection they go for first because it's the linchpin. If Jesus hasn't been raised, we have no reason to believe that anything he said was true.

We have no reason to listen to any of his teaching. We have no justification for placing any faith in him for the forgiveness of our sins because he's dead. Like Muhammad. Like Buddha. Like all these other figures from religious history who are now solidly in the grave. Completely and utterly dead.

But because Jesus is alive. Because this is not childish fiction. Because the Son of God has been raised and has gone to be with the Father in heaven soon to return. We can have full and complete confidence in everything he has ever said about everything. I remember C.S. Lewis once remarking that Jesus was either a complete liar or ridiculously crazy or everything he claimed to be and that there's no other way.

His teaching is too coherent. His claims too incredible for him to be anything else but one of those things. his claims. And I think it's an interesting detail in that whilst there are more disciples likely present, the eleven are specifically highlighted as being there. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee.

We know at least the women are there as well and certainly I think this commission extends to more than just the apostles but it's interesting that the detail is recorded that the eleven disciples went to Galilee. Why is this detail here? Well because this mission that Jesus is leaving with them rests upon the doctrine the apostles were soon to expound and teach as they began by the Holy Spirit and through the teaching of Jesus to, shall we say, fill out the Christian faith. Jesus himself is the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church, Ephesians chapter 2.

[12 : 54] And it's from this position of Christ having revealed himself in a particularly special way to the apostles. From him having revealed to them truths very clearly and specifically to them that they then begin and spearhead this mission to the world and we follow in their stead.

They are responsible for bringing to the church the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Jude verse 3. This meeting at the very beginning of the church's mission is an apostolic council of sorts.

It is an officially arranged meeting between Christ and the beginning representatives of the church on earth. And our journey to the world with the gospel must begin in a similar place.

We need to begin everything we do with the understanding that Christ is the foundation. He is the reason. He is the message. He is the sum content of our faith.

We don't so much preach a set of doctrines as we do invite people to know a person. That's the remarkable thing about our faith. Every other faith that I have had any exposure to has long lists of do's and don'ts and things you must or must not believe or practice.

[14 : 18] But when I was first introduced to the Christian faith it was primarily a person that I was being introduced to. Rather than a set of teachings per se. It's all about Jesus.

It all comes down to him. And our very beginning as a church, as individuals of taking this message of the gospel to the non-believing people that we know must begin with, Have I met Jesus?

Have I come to a place of having known him? Can I testify from personal experience of his salvation? Quite frankly I'm not interested in people showing up to church.

That doesn't excite me. What would excite me would be people saying I've found Jesus. I've come to meet Jesus. They can come to church afterwards if they like. But it must begin with, have you come to know Jesus?

Jesus Christ and the magnification of the glory of his fame amongst all peoples is, to put it briefly, our very mission.

[15 : 31] But I do think it's interesting, the next detail is that when they saw him they worshipped but some doubted. I love that kind of realism to Matthew's style.

He's very punchy, he's very to the point. He doesn't use very many words, he just says what he means. It's a very Jewish mark again. Matthew's writing is marked by his honesty and his taciturn manner.

Verse 17 says that when they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted. Sliding over that implicit reference to the divinity of Christ there, none is worshipped but God alone.

It's fascinating that Matthew intentionally records the personal doubts of some of those present. And of course the only people who've been explicitly mentioned as present are the eleven.

There probably are others but they're the people who are specifically said to be there. The first question is how did he know?

[16 : 29] How did he know they doubted? That's the first sort of question you should ask when that kind of statement appears. If you're thinking about this text from a critical point of view.

How does he know that people are doubted? Well firstly he himself is present. So perhaps he's mentioning himself. Perhaps, probably not. But it's one possibility. But it would seem then that Matthew has gone to some lengths in the construction of his gospel.

To spend time with particular individuals who are present at these kinds of moments. And has asked them what kind of reaction were you having? As Jesus stood there and some worshipped him.

And perhaps others said well I doubted. I doubted it was really Jesus risen from the dead. I thought perhaps it was a scam. And let's be frank.

Let's be honest. You doubt sometimes right? I mean let's get real. Doubts are sadly given our sin to be expected.

[17 : 33] But I think what's happily absent in this text is any kind of reprimand from Jesus. Because of course we know that Jesus sees men's hearts. We know that he perceives the faith and the doubts of men.

He's done it in this gospel and does it in all the others too. He has this ability to simply perceive a person's heart very clearly, doesn't he? And it's interesting that there is no kind of...

And he does give reprimands for doubting in other places. But at this particular point there is no mention of a reprimand from Christ. And I personally think that Matthew's intention is to show that even at the beginning of this mission, even as they were receiving the great commission from the lips of the risen Christ, they were struggling with their sin.

They were weak. They had doubts. It's as the scripture says, isn't it? He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass, like the flower of grass. The wind passes over and it is gone. And his place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting towards those who fear him.

[18 : 51] God understands that we are weak creatures. We were weak when he left us the mission. When he first gave the commandment that we were weak, the disciples were weak.

The church was weak. The disciples are not an impressive group of people. I don't know if you've ever considered this. It comes up in the book of Acts, doesn't it, when they say, you know, who are these uneducated fishermen? And then they remember that they had been with Jesus.

And friends, it's okay for our mission to start there too. So, in fact, I would say it's pretty important that we begin our mission by recognizing, I kind of can't do this.

I'm not very godly. I'm not really massively spiritual. I don't have everything I need. I'm not a complete person.

And in fact, it is those kinds of people who are often most effective in God's hands. It's those kinds of people who have a willingness to admit their shortcomings that God is pleased to use to reach other people who have shortcomings.

[20 : 04] You never reach a person for the gospel by making them feel like you've got it together and they don't. That's not what this is about. It's not about us having seven ways to fix your life or whatever.

We're not a self-help group. We're a Christ help group. We get together and we seek the help of Christ. And our mission is to take the knowledge and blessing and comfort that we have received from him to others.

Not just to one another. That's an important aspect. But out to the world to say we have found a way to solve the problem of sin. We've found a transforming presence.

Okay. Everybody wants a savior from hell. Okay. If anybody rationally believes in hell, they want a savior from it. That's not what we're advertising.

It is. But we're advertising a savior from sin. Not just deliverance from the wrath to come. Deliverance from the sin in here. The breaking of the power of sin.

[21 : 12] Newness of life. That's what we're offering. Transforming grace. I'm not saying it's going to get perfect. I'm not saying we're going to be fixed and there'll be no more problems.

It'll never be messy. Of course it will. But we're saying we've found the one who can fix us. That's the message. And Jesus understands that.

God does not expect our mission work on this earth to be perfect. Sure, the standard is perfection. I'm not lowering the standard. But God is realistic. Jesus dying to pay for our sin on the cross means that God can freely forgive our imperfection.

And now, filled with love, filled with mercy towards us, begin to deal with our sin. And it's out working in our lives. Okay.

Their mission also begins with Christ's authority. This is the nitty gritty of the actual commission now. And Jesus said to them, Okay, so Jesus, before issuing any commands of any kind, states a controlling truth.

- [22 : 26] Upon which the church has the authority to make some of the most audacious claims conceivable these days. Claims like, we have the solitary truth about God.
- Statements like, we know the only way of salvation. Statements like, there is no other God except the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- These statements are not acceptable in our culture. They're not pleasant. People don't like them. And we don't say them because we have some kind of inward, like, self-empowered omniscience.
- We say it because Christ has said, All authority in heaven has been given to me. Go therefore. So because Christ has authority, we can make such claims.
- Jesus tells his disciples of the reward he has received from his Father for his victorious suffering. All authority in heaven and earth. Jesus is head over all things for the church.
- [23 : 36] Ephesians 1.22 His authority is the basis of our mission in the sense that without it, we would have no guarantee of any success. I can't persuade anybody.
- And I used to work in sales. We can't persuade people of these things in our own power. It is Christ's authority.
- As it is, we can have complete confidence that the gospel will achieve all that God purposes for it in the earth. Psalm 2. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance.
- The son says to the father. If God is for us, who can be against us? It's that kind of confidence that a statement like that is designed to instill.
- When Christ says, All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, the response from us ought to be confidence. In the mission work that he then gives us to complete. This is encouraging indeed, isn't it?
- [24 : 44] That when you step forth in faith to proclaim the saving news about Jesus, you stand upon the very authority of God to speak about him.
- To speak the truth in love. Why are we ever afraid? Why are we ever embarrassed? I don't get the mentality that thinks the truth should be followed by an apology.
- I'm sorry to tell you this, but it's not fitting. It doesn't befit the saving news of Jesus. The scripture says, The wicked flees when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.
- Christ's authority legitimizes gospel risk. We live in a risk-averse culture. We live in a culture that has life insurance. We need to start taking more gospel risks.
- We need to just throw ourselves on these kinds of claims that Jesus makes. That all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Why should we ever be afraid of man?
- [25 : 52] In fact, the text does indeed make it explicit that the authority of Jesus is the basis upon which our mission continues. Because it then goes and says, Go therefore.
- It's not just two disconnected statements. It's all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. The therefore is the connecting word.
- It is in light of this fact, on the basis of this statement, in knowledge of this truth, go and. That's the way the sentence functions.
- Right? That's the way it's functioning. So what is it that they go and do? The foundation is laid. The grace of God and salvation and sanctification.
- The authority of the resurrected Christ. What happens now? He's told us to go. He's given us this encouragement. Fourthly, their mission begins with work. Okay?

[26 : 54] Notice the active verbs. Go. Make. Baptise. Teach.

Whatever this commission is, it's full of stuff that you've got to do. Okay? You. You. We. Us. Works. Doing stuff.

Any Calvinist squirming yet? Okay? We're not comfortable, really, are we, in reform circles with these kinds of, you know, concepts that I've actually got to go and do something.

But it's, we can't miss this. It's really important. Okay? That we grasp the reality of the Great Commission. To reach the nations with the gospel is our chief world-facing work.

Why are we here? Okay? We became Christians. We didn't just get zapped back up to heaven. So we're left here for some reason.

[27 : 54] And Jesus is providing this reason here. We have got to get out of the pews and into the streets. Into the community. Into the friendship groups and clubs that this culture seems to gather in.

Sometimes the nurses outnumber the soldiers in this war. We get a bit too comfortable doing the church thing. And maybe we need to break out of that.

I speak as much to myself as to anybody else. It's easy to preach in the church because you all feel compelled to listen to me. Yeah? Some of you would listen to me even if you didn't want to. Some of you look like you don't.

Okay? But it's not like that on the street. It's easy to preach with a microphone. But when you're toe-to-toe with somebody in the street and they do not want to listen to you. That is harder.

Okay? When you're having that difficult conversation about God's judgment with your friend. That's hard. That's more difficult. And you've got to have that conversation.

[28 : 58] To be faithful, you've got to have that conversation. You've got to talk about God's judgment. You must talk about repentance. You can't leave these things out. Okay? Okay? We need the Holy Spirit's help to arrest people's attention.

To listen to the gospel. To respond to it. By grace and be saved. Fifthly, their mission begins with preaching and teaching. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Okay? When I say preaching and teaching, I don't particularly mean methods of communication like this is preaching and that's teaching. What I mean is there is a two-fold aspect to this work.

Okay? It's make disciples, which is the proclamation of the gospel to people who do not believe it and to the point where they do. And then it's teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you.

Okay? We're making disciples, not converts. Not interested in decisions for Christ. Decisions for Christ are wonderful. But they're just the beginning.

[30 : 08] Because we're actually trying to multiply the number of Christians equipped to go and make more Christians. So firstly, we're teaching people about Jesus.

Okay? We're teaching them about who he is and what he's done until they become a disciple. And then we're preparing them to go through teaching them everything that Jesus has commanded.

Okay? Not the four spiritual laws. Not ABC. Not ten steps to discipleship. Everything I have commanded you. Forming them into fully fledged disciples and then sending them off to do exactly the same thing.

And we're multiplying out like that. That's the kind of, I think that's the kind of vision that Jesus is portraying here. We should also, that means we should be teaching people to teach people.

That's a key skill. Because they are two different things. Remember once hearing somebody say, those who can't teach, those who can't teach, teach PE. Personally, that was a bit unfair. But it's not like that.

[31 : 20] Because being able to do something and being able to teach others to do something and being able to teach others to teach others to do something are three different sets of skills.

All together. Entirely different things. Firstly, just teaching somebody to be a Christian. That involves lots of messy life stuff.

That might mean they have to come round your house a lot. And that might mean you have to listen to them talk about weird stuff. Until they figure out how to get Christ into their life in an appropriate way.

In a manner worthy of the gospel. And then teaching them to then go out and teach other people. It's different altogether. But then you've also got to be teaching the people who are going to be teaching these people to teach.

It's huge. It's lots and lots of teaching going on. All over the place. But that's the kind of sets of skills that we should always be developing in this mission that we have.

[32 : 25] And the reality is it's dangerous because it means being vulnerable with each other. Okay? It means dropping church face. Alright? It means having our hypocrisy and our sinfulness exposed to each other.

But of course we are inside the community of grace, aren't we? Right? We're in a place where it's safe to admit you're a sinner. In fact it's, you know, kind of one of the ways you get in in the first place.

Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. And so we can be confident to admit, I've got this problem with this.

Perhaps I gossip. Perhaps I can't stop getting angry with my wife. Perhaps I just stress out over stuff and I worry a lot.

There are all kinds of things that we just need to be prepared to say, Look, I do this and I want the gospel to change it, so help me. Because that kind of environment is attractive.

[33 : 36] Okay. Their mission also begins with a promise. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded to you. And behold, I am with you always.

Till the end of the age. Phew. That's good news. I'll be with you. The glory and the mercy and the wonder of that promise makes everything I just said seem far more manageable, doesn't it?

Jesus himself promises to be with us in the midst of this work. Doesn't it all just seem so much easier when we consider that? Doesn't it look a thousand times less frightening?

In this world we will struggle, but he has overcome the world. In this life we'll stumble. The future we have is secure. The unseen things are eternal.

There is a weight of glory. The very risen Christ will be with you as you talk to your friend whose wife has just died. The master of the universe will stand by your side when you're passing out tracts.

[34 : 45] He'll go with you to Pilates. Pilates. He'll join you with the hairdressers. He'll run round the pitch with you. He'll sit in the pub with the guys from rugby with you.

Can you imagine if you were to go into an actual war? Okay? So let's pretend there's a war happening in Whitby and you've all been called to go to this battlefield, you know, out towards Fylingdales or whatever.

And you're all about to go and you're all dressed up. Can you imagine how encouraging it would be if Jesus Christ himself was right there actually praying for you?

Like all fear would just be dispersed. Jesus Christ is just on the other side of the piano praying for us.

You wouldn't be so afraid anymore, would you, if you could actually hear his very words as he prayed. But what difference does distance make?

[35 : 51] He's still praying for you. He ever lives to intercede for us. This is his mission. It's his work.

He has sent you. He doesn't leave you on your own. He gives you everything you need. His very presence. All the scriptures. All your brothers and sisters around you.

Every resource you could ever need. He gives more grace. All the time. I love this promise. It's the promise of grace sufficient for every single moment, isn't it?

Everything you need for right where you are, right now. If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, you're probably really freaked out right now.

That's okay. We're glad you're here. It's nice to see you. What are we talking about here? What is this? We're talking about a mission and a message and a person. So what am I really talking about?

[36 : 57] Well, the reason that we've met together this morning is because we love this guy called Jesus. And he's incredible. He was the only perfect human being who ever lived.

But more than that, he was God in the flesh. And he lived the perfect life that we have failed to live. And then he died a shameful death on our behalf, taking God's punishment in our place.

And now all the good stuff that he has done is kind of credited into my account. And all the bad stuff that I have done was kind of thrown onto him at the cross. And now I stand completely pure, utterly perfect, completely acceptable to God.

Not because I actually am, but because that's what he counts me to be, through my trust in Jesus. That's it. That's the thing we're all so excited about.

That's the message we're going out to tell people. That if they turn from their love of sinning and put their trust in Jesus, they can have everything we've got too.

[38 : 04] They can have that complete forgiveness too. That's the message we're wanting to take out and tell everybody because it's the best possible news for broken people like us.

So to summarise, we begin our mission with meeting Jesus. He himself is the very bottom and sum of our mission.

Our doubts are real. Christ knows our weakness and he loves us still. He himself has all authority and exercises it through our communication of the gospel for his glory.

He leaves us with a clear cut and active task to fulfil. He requires more than boxes ticked. He is seeking transformed lives and he'll be with us now and forever.

and always. May his grace and mercy ever tune the strings of our hearts to play the sweet melody of deep and powerful love to him.

[39 : 20] Amen. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Jangan Latino Nobody