

Dive In

Mt 28:18-20

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Almost a century ago, “fancy diving” entered the Olympic Games as a new event.
 1. Diving developed in Europe in the 17th century, when gymnasts practiced their acrobatics over water.
 2. Diving combines artistry and athleticism with undeniable courage—platform divers hit the water at about 34 mph, and ranks as one of the Olympic Games’ most exhilarating events.
 3. The most exciting diving competition in Olympic history likely occur in 1988.
 - a. That year, Greg Louganis cracked his head on the springboard while attempting a reverse 2.5 pike.
 - b. After receiving stitches, Louganis won gold in both men’s events.
- B. In tonight’s text, Jesus encourages his disciples to dive into the world with his Gospel.
 1. READ TEXT.
 2. While Jesus encourages his disciples to go into all the world with his Gospel, this is likely not the most obeyed text in Scripture.
 - a. It has been theorized that Lk 9:20-21 is the most obeyed command of Jesus: “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Peter answered, ‘The Christ of God.’ And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one.”
 - b. Of course, Jesus spoke before his death & resurrection—a time when the apostles were not yet ready to share that message with the world.
 3. Tonight, we will examine the “Great Commission” and essentials to carrying out that commission so that we might “Dive In” the world!

II. THE GREAT COMMISSION.

- A. We have typically referred to this text as the “Great Commission.” What is it that makes this commission so great?
- B. THIS COMMISSION IS GREAT IN ITS AUTHORITY.
 1. When Jesus came to the disciples, he said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (v 18).
 2. The Father gave Jesus “all authority.”
 - a. It makes perfect sense that the Father gave him all authority, for he created all things—“By him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible, and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17).
 - b. Because Jesus created all things and has been given “all authority,” there is absolutely nothing outside his authority.
 - It is he, for example, who has the authority to forgive sins.
 - “The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mk 2:10).
 - The question has often been asked how the thief on the cross could have been saved without baptism.
 - In the first place, he may very well have been baptized by John—there is no way of knowing whether or not he was.
 - In the second place, that doesn’t matter, because when Jesus was on earth, he could forgive the sins of anyone by whatever means he chose. Now, he has spelled out precisely how he will forgive sins through his apostles.
 - Because Jesus has all authority, he has instructed his people to go in the world with the Gospel by his great authority.
- C. THIS COMMISSION IS GREAT IN ITS MISSION.
 1. The mission of the church is to make disciples.
 - a. The KJV translates this as “teach all nations,” yet the Gr is “make disciples of all the nations.”

- b. The basic idea of a “disciple” is a student.
 - In the ancient world, those who taught—whether they be Jewish rabbis or philosophers—gathered disciples around them. The famous philosopher Plato was a disciple of Socrates, and Aristotle was a disciple of Plato.
 - The teacher would instruct his disciples, and then they would become teachers themselves: “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Lk 6:40).
 - c. Jesus instructs his apostles to make learners of him throughout the world.
 - Thus, as disciples, we are constantly learning from Jesus. Jesus encourages all to do that: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and *learn from me*, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt 11:28-29).
 - In the early church, the term “disciple” came to be used quite similar to the way we use the word “Christian” today: When Paul had spent some time in Antioch, “he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23).
 - d. This commission is to make Christians, to cause people to commit themselves to following Jesus.
2. In this passage, there are two ways that disciples are made: they are baptized & they are taught to observe whatever Jesus taught.
 - a. The Gr shows baptism & teaching occur simultaneously with the making of disciples.
 - b. Thus, disciples are made by being baptized & by being taught.
 3. Baptism is essential to being Jesus’ disciple.
 - a. Of course, we have been told by many for years that baptism is not essential. This text makes clear that if we are to be Jesus’ disciple—i.e., a Christian—we must be baptized. There is simply no way around it.
 - b. Baptism is for the remission of sins.
 - When those at Pentecost wanted to know how they could remove the guilt of having crucified the Messiah, Peter answered, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).
 - Recently in our Sunday morning Bible class, we discussed our “for the remission of sins” means “in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins,” so we won’t repeat that discussion here.
 - Yet, those who would translate this phrase as “because of the remission of sins” have a giant hurdle to jump through.
 - The Jews have just heard they are responsible for the death of the Messiah; they cry out, “What shall we do?”
 - It would seem odd indeed for Peter to say, “Repent and be baptized because your sins are already forgiven!”
 - c. As one becomes a disciple through baptism, he has his sins forgiven.
 4. Teaching is also essential to being Jesus’ disciple.
 - a. Baptism is only the beginning of the Christian life—continued teaching is absolutely essential.
 - b. “Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:41-42).
 - c. I fear, quite frankly, that this is an area where we have neglected the Great Commission.
 - Too many mission efforts have established churches in remote areas and then left those new brethren without any instruction. Not only do many of those Christians cease worshiping altogether, but many of those congregations go into apostasy rather quickly.
 - Even in established congregations such as this one, we’ve often baptized folk & not performed the necessary follow-up so that those new Christians know how to live.
- D. THIS COMMISSION IS ALSO GREAT IN ITS SCOPE.**
1. This commission is for all nations.
 - a. In Luke’s account, Jesus says that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations” (24:47).
 - b. The commission is for all nations, for God accepts people of all nationalities. Peter begins his sermon to Cornelius by saying: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35).
 2. This is a commission for “all nations,” not just our own.

- a. Jesus would have us think “globally” when it comes to missions.
- b. There is nothing wrong in thinking of our own community and finding ways to reach our own community. There are lost people right here in Lincoln County & we must not neglect them.
- c. However, we also need to think of those abroad.
 - We cannot allow our patriotism & love for this country to cloud our vision. We cannot believe that the lost in this country have any more value to God than the lost in any other nation.
 - The Lord Jesus died for all people, and we must take the Gospel to all people.
- d. It’s wonderful to be associated with a congregation that thinks globally.
 - There are many good works outside the United States that we support—the work in Panama & the work in Scotland. We have given money to others who have traveled to foreign countries with the Gospel.
 - Let us continue our commitment to world-wide missions!

E. THIS COMMISSION IS ALSO GREAT IN ITS PROMISE.

1. In this commission, Jesus promises to be with us until the end of the age, i.e., the end of the world.
2. As we carry out this commission, we do not go alone, but the Lord goes with us!

F. The Commission is indeed great! Shall we carry it out?

III. ESSENTIALS IN CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION.

A. It is sadly the case that Jesus’ words to his disciples are more of a “Great Omission” than a “Great Commission.” In order to make this the Great Commission, there are four things we need:

B. We need a GREAT FAITH:

1. If we do not believe that we can carry out this Commission, there is no way we can carry it out.
 - a. That was the problem of ten of the spies Moses sent into Canaan. They came back and said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are” (Num 13:31).
 - b. The spies forgot all that God had done—the plagues against the Egyptians, the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna & quail. If God could conquer the Egyptians, why couldn’t he conquer the people in Canaan?
2. The disciples tried to cast out a demon & could not do so.
 - a. When they asked Jesus why they couldn’t cast out the demon, the Lord told them they didn’t have enough faith.
 - b. He then adds: “I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” (Mt 17:20).
 - That text comes specifically from a time when the Lord gave miraculous gifts to his people.
 - While we will never be able to move literal mountains with our faith, the principle remains the same: Great faith leads to great deeds.
3. Do we have great faith?
 - a. Do we believe that the church can carry the Gospel into all nations?
 - b. Do we believe that the God who raised his Son from the dead is able to help us as we share his message?

C. We also need GREAT PRAYER:

1. Prayer has such great power: “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit” (Js 5:16-18).
2. People who are not interested enough to pray are not interested enough to work hard.
3. As we think specifically about the Great Commission, for what things do we need to pray?
 - a. We need to pray for laborers to go into the vineyard: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:37-38).
 - The idea is not that we pray for the Lord to send out laborers while we sit at home and do nothing.
 - The idea is that we pray for even more workers to be sent out into the vineyard.
 - b. We need to pray for the salvation of men’s souls: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (Rm 10:1).
 - c. We need to pray for boldness as we proclaim that truth:
 - When Peter & John were taken before the Sanhedrin, they went back to the church and reported the Sanhedrin’s instructions to preach no more in Jesus’ name.

- The brethren then prayed together: “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness” (Acts 4:29).

D. We also need a GREAT LOVE:

1. If we are to share the message of Jesus with the lost, we absolutely must love them!
2. The cliché has been repeated numerous times: People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. If we do not demonstrate love, how will people ever know that we care?
3. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).
 - a. God has demonstrated great love for the world.
 - d. Are we, like our Father, demonstrating great love for the world?

E. We also need a GREAT PERSISTENCE.

1. Lk 18:1-8.
 - a. The woman in that parable received what she wanted because she did not give up.
 - b. We cannot give up too easily.
2. It took Noah 120 years to build the ark. Let us commit not to giving up when things don’t go our way, but to carrying on in the Lord’s work!