**THE GREAT COMMISSION Matthew 28 :16 to 20**

This week is one of our one-off’s as we take a break from the Sermon on the Mount. The sermon at 9.00 was based on the statement right at the end of Matthew’s gospel often called the Great Commission. It is a statement that cannot be ignored as it is Jesus laying down standing orders for the disciples to carry on the work he has started. In some ways it is surprising in that Matthew’s gospel was written for a primarily Jewish readership and yet they are told that the good news about Jesus is for the whole world (an echo of Abraham’s command to be a blessing to all nations – Genesis 12:3). It is also worth noting that, in Matthew’s account, the infant Jesus is worshipped by visiting Gentiles – the wise men.

1. How do we make sense of Jesus’ command to go into all the world?

What does that mean for each of us in terms of the actions we should take?

Most of us will not have a world-wide ministry so how do we define our world?

Some people find this command very daunting. After all, what impact can I possibly have on the very small world that I live in. But the risen Jesus goes to a place of great familiarity to meet this band of 11 – a mountain in Galilee where it is probable, they had met many times during those three frantic years. (v16). The angel at the grave had made it clear where they should go (28:7 & 10).

1. Even in this post-resurrection period Jesus wants to assure his faithful band that they are not alone.

Do we too easily think we are alone?

Do we realise that God is with us when we go into ‘our world’.

The disciple’s response to Jesus is to worship him – do we too easily want to ‘serve’ before we ‘worship’?

Why do you think some doubted? (Remember, that means one/some of the 11 doubted)

In a mixed state of bewilderment, worship, and astonishment, Jesus brings strength and calm to them. His initial words are to give them personal security – it’s not all up to them because they go ‘into all the world’ with the authority of the risen Son of God. This is an all-inclusive authority. We go

* With all authority
* To all nations
* Teaching all things
* Until the second coming of Jesus (‘the very end of the age’)

1. What does this authority add to our task?

How does it expand what we can do if we understand that we are working for a master who has complete authority over his creation and its people?

The task is sometimes misunderstood. We sometimes think of it as getting converts or maybe persuading someone to come to church. But Jesus’ command is led by the imperative to ‘make disciples’ (v19) coupled with the three words, ‘go’, ‘baptising’ and ‘teaching’. These three words make it clear that making disciples is a process not a quick fix. One commentator writes

***‘The Great commission implies more than securing salvation’ (Michael J. Wilkins)***

Jesus spent a lot of time guiding and instructing the disciples in their growth. He now sends them (and us) out to do the same.

1. Do we sometimes think our work is done once we’ve had a couple of conversations or persuaded someone to come church?

Have you identified an area where you can ‘go’?

Do you see it as your task to ‘go’?

What is our role in ‘teaching’? Jesus says it so that they can ‘obey’. Do we teach obedience?

Is it important to have a public declaration of faith as in baptism?

The idea of ‘God with us’ appears in the first chapter of Matthew (‘Immanuel – God with us’ in 1:23). Now Jesus states that he will be with them until the ‘end of the age’. In other words, ‘God with us’ is a constant presence that will never fail or desert us.

1. How does this change our attitude and actions in reaching out with the gospel?

Is the continuing presence of Jesus threatening or re-assuring?

Talk about some occasions where you have experienced God’s presence in a conversation about Jesus.

You may also like to talk about times where conversations have not been easy.

You may also like to share the names of people you are trying to engage with and have the group pray for them.

Last week we were celebrating Pentecost. If you put that together with Great Commission you have ‘the task’ and ‘the power’. We are not called to be ***successful*** in our response to the Great Commission but we are called to be ***faithful.*** We are not trying to notch up as many converts as we can get – but we are commanded to do what we can in the networks we live in to make Jesus known and help people find a living relationship with Jesus as Saviour and Lord.