

RISEN!

MATTHEW 28



*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

T . M . M O O R E

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Risen! Matthew 28  
Copyright 2020 T. M. and Susie Moore  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All psalms for singing adapted from The Ailbe Psalter. All quotations from Church Fathers from Ancient Christian Commentary Series, General Editor Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).*

## Matthew 28: Introduction

Matthew's gospel closes with the thrilling news of Jesus' resurrection, and the mandate to all believers to make disciples of all nations.

We who are followers of Jesus must follow the example of the women and the disciples who believed in Jesus, and take up our calling to make disciples as we are going about the daily activities of our lives.

Please visit our website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org), to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our thrice-weekly devotional newsletter, *Crosfigell*, or our daily *Voices Together* devotional and prayer guide.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 First Day of the New Age

*Pray Psalm 96.8-10.*

Give to the LORD the glory *due* His name;  
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.  
Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!  
Tremble before Him, all the earth.  
Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns;  
The world also is firmly established,  
It shall not be moved;  
He shall judge the peoples righteously.”

*Sing Psalm 96.8-10.*

(Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above\*](#))

Bring offerings sweet to Him, our Lord; in holy garments praise Him!  
Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!  
The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove.  
Exalt the Lord and praise Him.

*Read and meditate on Matthew 28.1-4.*

*Prepare.*

1. How did the earth respond to the resurrection of Jesus?
2. Who moved the stone that sealed the tomb? How did the guards respond?

*Meditate.*

Forget about all those chubby, goofy-looking angels you’ve seen since childhood, and even angels who look like men with wings. Angels are not like that, as our text today makes plain. Imagine yourself one of those guards. It’s early in the morning – not quite light. You’re drowsy and eager to be relieved. Then you begin to feel the earth trembling. The trembling becomes a quaking. Something like a lightning bolt strikes the tomb you’re guarding, and when you look, it’s a being unlike any you’ve ever seen. While the earth shakes with joy, you and your comrades shake with fear, and fall down as dead.

A new day has dawned. Jesus has risen from the dead. The tomb was not opened to let Jesus out, but so that we could see in. The single angel who broke the seal would have been sufficient to handle all the guards, had they chosen to fight, or all the Roman contingent in Jerusalem, or even all the legions of Roman armies scattered over the earth. The new day is the first day of the new age, the age of resurrection, and it begins with the trembling of the earth and the light of heaven.

The first day of the new age sees Christ risen from the dead, the light of God causing the darkness to scatter and sinners to cringe, and the earth leaping with joy, because Christ has reconciled the world to His Father, and the day of salvation has begun. It is a day for new songs (Ps. 96.1), for praising the Lord and proclaiming His salvation (Ps. 96.2), and for feeling the earth tremble beneath our feet as Christ’s Kingdom advances on it (Ps. 96. 11-13). Matthew ends his gospel where he began it, pointing to the Old Testament and its many teachings about Jesus and His salvation.

“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” were also there, and we shall see that the angel has a special

redemptive mission for them.

*Reflect.*

1. The quaking of the earth at Jesus' resurrection points us back to Psalm 96? Why?
2. Why were the guards terrified? What do we learn about the power of God from this passage?
3. The angel broke the seal on Jesus' tomb and opened it. Why?

*After the resurrection the angel appeared. But for what purpose did he come? To roll back the stone. Why? To attest to the women of the resurrection so that they might believe. The women themselves had earlier witnessed him in the sepulcher. Now they behold an empty tomb. This is why the angel rolled the stone away and why an earthquake took place: that they might be thoroughly aroused and awakened to the resurrection. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 89.2**

*Every new day is the day of salvation, Lord Jesus. Help me today to...*

*Pray Psalm 96.1-7, 11-13.*

Celebrate the resurrection of Jesus with all creation, and commit yourself this day to proclaiming His salvation by your life and words.

*Sing Psalm 96.1-7, 11-13.*

**Psalm 96.1-7, 11-13** (Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above\*](#))

Sing to the Lord! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!  
Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!  
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised!  
Fear Him, and sing His glory!

All other gods are idols vain; the Lord created heaven.  
Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him be glory given!  
All fam'lies, praise this mighty Lord! Give strength and glory to His Word;  
exalt the Lord of heaven.

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!  
Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly  
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.  
He comes; exalt Him greatly!

## 2 Come See, Go Tell

*Pray Psalm 144.1, 2.*

Blessed *be* the LORD my Rock,  
Who trains my hands for war,  
*And* my fingers for battle—  
My lovingkindness and my fortress,  
My high tower and my deliverer,  
My shield and *the One* in whom I take refuge,  
Who subdues my people under me.

*Sing Psalm 144.1, 2, 15.*

(Tidings: [\*O Zion, Haste, Your Mission High Fulfilling\*](#))

Blessed be the Lord, Who trains my hands for battle;  
He is my Rock, my steadfast love and strength!  
He is my shield; no foe can shake or rattle;  
He will subdue them all to me at length.

*Refrain v. 15*

Happy are they on whom blessings fall!  
Blessed are the people who on Jesus' mercy call!

*Read Matthew 28.1-8; meditate on verses 5-8.*

*Prepare.*

1. What instructions did the angel give the women?
2. How did the women respond?

*Meditate.*

The meaning of Jesus' resurrection can be summarized in the words of this angel: "Come see; go tell."

Angels are a comforting presence to those who believe. Here the angel's manifestation to the women is the same as the angel to the shepherds when Jesus was born: "Don't be afraid" (cf. Lk. 2.10). The faithful have nothing to fear from engaging the unseen realm, for now Jesus has passed through the veil and is ruling at the right hand of the Father. Angels do His bidding, and carry out His will, all of which is toward us for good (Rom. 8.28).

"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said." What a world of joy and assurance is packed into that simple statement! He is not here because death cannot hold Him. He is risen because He said He would, and nothing can thwart His will. What He has said, will be, and what He has done changes everything.

Come see, go tell: The women did, and they would.

The angel commissioned the women to bring the Good News to the disciples (v. 7). This is an extremely important action, which we'll explore more fully tomorrow. Suffice to show that the first evangelists in the new era of the Gospel were women, commissioned from on high.

True to their calling, the women went at once to fulfill their mission (v. 8). We note that they were filled “with fear and great joy”. No, these affections are not opposites; they are complementary, and instruct us about the nature of our relationship with God. We fear Him because of Who He is and who we are; but we rejoice in the salvation Jesus has accomplished for us, and to be called by Him to make that Good News known.

Come see, go tell. This should be our practice every day.

*Reflect.*

1. Why is “come see, go tell” a good way to think about our lives as followers of Jesus?
2. Why do you think the Lord chose the women to take the Good News to the disciples?
3. Why are fear and joy two sides of the same coin of faith?

*The women received the reward of continuing with him. They were first to see and gladly declare not only what had been said to them but also what they themselves had seen. John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 89.2*

*Let me see You in Your Word, Lord Jesus, that I may go and tell Your Good News to...*

*Pray Psalm 144.3-15.*

Christ has given us His salvation, and He calls us to proclaim it to the world. We are happiest and most blessed when we’re following where Jesus leads.

*Sing Psalm 144.3-15.*

**Psalm 144.3-15** (Tidings: [O Zion, Haste, Your Mission High Fulfilling](#))

Lord, who are we, that You regard and love us?  
Why should You care for our poor sinful plight?  
We are but breath; You dwell on high above us;  
our days like shadows pass before Your light.

*Refrain*

Happy are they on whom blessings fall!  
Blessed are the people who on Jesus’ mercy call!

Bow down the heav’ns, come down and touch the mountains.

Flash forth like lightning; scatter all Your foes!  
Send out Your arrows, send them out to rout them;  
stretch forth Your hand and save us from all woes!

*Refrain*

From every foe and every lie deliver!  
Then will we sing new songs unto Your praise.  
Rescue Your servants, who are Yours forever;  
grant us deliv’rance by Your hand always.

*Refrain*

Bless, Lord, our children, strengthen them forever.  
All our provision, day by day supply.  
Bless our endeavors; from distress deliver.

Keep us from harm and all distressing cries.

*Refrain*

### 3 Rejoice! Fear Not!

*Pray Psalm 96.8-10.*

Give to the LORD the glory *due* His name;  
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.  
Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!  
Tremble before Him, all the earth.  
Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns;  
The world also is firmly established,  
It shall not be moved;  
He shall judge the peoples righteously.”

*Sing Psalm 96.8-10.*

(Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above\*](#))

Bring offsprings sweet to Him, our Lord; in holy garments praise Him!  
Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!  
The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove.  
Exalt the Lord and praise Him.

*Read Matthew 28.1-10; meditate on verses 9, 10.*

*Prepare.*

1. How did the women respond to seeing Jesus?
2. What did He tell them to do?

*Meditate.*

Let’s set this stage a bit more fully. I want to reconstruct the events of this morning as best I can, though it’s difficult, and some of what follows is necessarily speculative.

First, it seems as though Mary Magdalene may have come to the tomb by herself, quite early (Jn. 20.1). When she “saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb”, she ran to tell Peter and the other disciples (Jn. 20.2). Upon hearing this, Peter and John ran to the tomb, and found it just as Mary had reported (Jn. 20.3-8). Having seen the empty tomb, Peter and John “went away again to their own homes” (Jn. 20.10).

It seems that Mary returned to the tomb, where she perhaps was met by the other women, who brought the spices for anointing Jesus’ body (Mk. 16.1ff). By this time, Peter and John had already arrived and left. These women – Mary the mother of James, Joanna, Salome, and perhaps others – may not yet have known about the resurrection. They were simply coming as agreed to do the work of anointing the body. At that point, perhaps pointed out by Mary Magdalene, the women saw the stone rolled away and went into the tomb; and there they were met by “two men” in shining garments (Lk. 24.4; “angels”, Jn. 20.12). Mark records only one “man clothed in a long white robe” (Mk. 16.5), and Mark may have mentioned only him because he was the spokesman (Matt. 28.5).

It appears then that the other women left the tomb and Mary Magdalene just outside it, weeping (Jn. 20.11). Perhaps the women began to go to the disciples, as instructed by the angel (Matt. 28.8). Jesus appeared to Mary, apparently while she was alone (Jn. 20.11-18), at which time she received the additional information about His forthcoming ascension (Jn. 20.17). Mary then ran to catch up with

the other women, and together they went to the disciples, where Mary reported these events (Jn. 20.18). Upon hearing again about the resurrection, Peter appears to have returned to the tomb for a second look (Lk. 24.12). Luke has him coming to the tomb alone and departing, “marveling to himself at what had happened.”

This is only one person’s attempt to harmonize the reports from the four gospels. But let’s note a few things that I think are important for the redemptive work of Christ and the character of the Kingdom.

First, John deliberately invokes a garden setting. Mary saw Jesus and supposed Him to be the gardener (Jn. 20.15). Mary is in the garden of death, and the Word of God comes to her, speaking her name. Mary embraces Him, clinging to Him, so great is her love for the Word of God. She is the antitype of Eve, who turned away from the Word of God in the garden of life, and thus brought death to the world. Here, Mary clings to the Word of life, and is appointed to announce the Good News of Jesus’ victory over death and His ascension to glory.

But wait: Peter and John had, by this time, been to the tomb and left. Why didn’t Jesus just tell them Himself? Why wait for them to leave, and then enlist Mary to bring the news? Because in choosing Mary, Jesus reversed the curse of Eden. He made a woman – from the very dregs of womanhood – His herald of the Good News. Paul tells us that sin came into the world by one man, Adam (Rom. 5.12). But he is using Adam as the representative of all people. Jesus chose to reveal Himself first to Mary – first to a woman – who would undo for the apostles and the world the curse that Eve had introduced through her disobedience. Eve ate the apple and gave death to the world. Mary embraced the Bread of Life, and offered it to the disciples, the world, and us.

This is a beautiful, thrilling passage. Spend some time meditating on it, and thank Jesus for the majesty and wisdom and mercy of His redeeming grace.

*Reflect.*

1. Jesus told the women to rejoice and not be afraid. How are each of those instructions applicable to you in working your Personal Mission Field?
2. Why do you think Jesus first revealed Himself to the women?
3. In what ways is Jesus’ message to the women the same message for us?

*“And behold, Jesus met them, saying ‘Hail!’ ” They who sought him out and ran to him deserved to be the first to meet the risen Lord and to hear him say, “Hail.” Thus it happened that Eve’s curse was undone by these women. Jerome (347-420), *Commentary on Matthew 4.28.8-9**

*Today, Lord, You are sending me into my own Personal Mission Field, so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 96.1-7, 11-13.*

Jesus calls us to proclaim the Good News of His salvation. Pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field, especially those you expect to see today. Ask the Lord to give you something to share with each of them, to encourage them to look to Jesus.

*Sing Psalm 96.1-7, 11-13.*

**Psalm 96.1-7, 11-13** (Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*)

Sing to the Lord! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!

Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!  
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised!  
Fear Him, and sing His glory!

All other gods are idols vain; the Lord created heaven.  
Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him be glory given!  
All fam'lies, praise this mighty Lord! Give strength and glory to His Word;  
exalt the Lord of heaven.

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!  
Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly  
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.  
He comes; exalt Him greatly!

## 4 More Lies

Pray Psalm 12.1, 2.

Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!  
For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.  
They speak idly everyone with his neighbor;  
*With* flattering lips *and* a double heart they speak.

Sing Psalm 12.1, 2.

(Hamburg: [\*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross\*](#))

Help, Lord! The godly cease to be; they who believe in Christ are few.  
Falsely the wicked confidently flatter, deceive, and mock Your truth.

Read Matthew 28.1-15; meditate on verses 11-15.

Prepare.

1. How did the chief priests respond to the guard's report?
2. What did the guard do then?

Meditate.

We are not surprised by this reaction of the chief priests to the report of the guards. What did the guard report? An earthquake. A bright light. An angel. The stone rolled away and the tomb vacant. These men were eyewitnesses to the resurrection, and the chief priests – who would not believe Moses and the prophets when they wrote about Jesus – didn't believe these guards, either (cf. Lk. 16.29-31).

But it wasn't enough that the chief priests refused to believe; they didn't want anyone else to believe either. So they bribed the guards and promised to cover their backs "if this comes to the governor's ears". If? It is a measure of their blindness, and of the power of the lie, that these priests could not even begin to understand the ramifications of that empty tomb. Not only would the governor hear of it, the whole world would!

What a stupid excuse: "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.'" The least bright student in Logic 101 would be able to expose the ludicrousness of this excuse. First, the disciples, who had all fled Jesus and were in hiding somewhere, managed to screw up the courage and marshal the strength to roll away the stone and take Jesus' body away, *without waking any of the Roman guard*? It's helpful to remember that Roman guards tended to be extremely vigilant, because their lives might be at stake if they failed in their assignment (cf. Acts 12.19).

And what would the disciples have had in mind? Reburying the body somewhere else, then standing forth boldly to declare that He was alive? Oh yeah, that's believable.

Second, our logic student might ask, If the guards were *asleep*, how would they *know* the disciples had come and done this?

Yeah. Dumb. And this was not just the chief priests, but the entire counsel of elders that concocted this ridiculous explanation for the empty tomb (v. 12).

But it worked, because “this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” And not just among the Jews. People will believe whatever they want to, as ludicrous as it may be, so long as it allows them *not* to believe in Jesus and the resurrection.

*Reflect.*

1. What excuses have you heard people give for not believing in Jesus and the resurrection?
2. Why is the lie (Rom. 1.18-25) so blinding? How can we keep from falling under the sway of the lie?
3. How can you see that the lie has compounding effects among like-minded people?

*How could they have stolen him? O most foolish of all men! They can't even lie plausibly! The conspicuousness of the truth highlights their falsehood. For indeed what they said after the bribe was extremely farfetched. Their falsehood did not even have the ring of plausibility. For how, I ask, could the disciples have stolen him? They were poor and unlearned. They were hiding out at this time, not even venturing to show themselves. John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew 90.1*

*Lord Jesus, You are alive! Live through me today, Jesus, so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 12.3-8.*

Ask God to prepare you for the day ahead, that you will not be deceived nor led astray from Jesus by the lies of the enemy.

*Sing Psalm 12.3-8.*

**Psalm 12.3-8** (Hamburg: [When I Survey the Wondrous Cross](#))

Stop, Lord, the lips that utter lies, all those who speak with boasting tongue!  
See how Your holy Word they despise, while their own praises they have sung.

Rise up, O Lord, and rescue all Your precious children sore distressed.  
Save those who faithfully on You call; grant them deliv'rance, peace, and rest.

Your words are pure and proven true, like silver seven times refined.  
You will preserve Your Word ever new, and keep the heart to You inclined.

Proudly the wicked strut and stand; Your indignation builds on high.  
Men may exalt their wicked plans, but You will judge them by and by.

## 5 Seen, Worshiped

*Pray Psalm 16.8, 9.*

I have set the LORD always before me;  
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;  
My flesh also will rest in hope.

*Sing Psalm 16.8, 9, 11.*

(All to Christ: [\*Jesus Paid It All\*](#))

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.  
But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.

*Refrain v. 11*

Make me know life's way! Pleasures fill Your hand.  
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

*Read Matthew 28.1-17; Meditate on verses 16, 17.*

*Prepare.*

1. How did the disciples respond to the report of the women?
2. How did they respond to Jesus?

*Meditate.*

We can assume that the women carried out their assignment (v. 10), for the disciples “went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them” (v. 16). Some questions come to mind: Why didn't Jesus just meet them on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem? Why did He have them make that rather long journey to Galilee? And how was it that the disciples were able to believe the women, and leave their hiding places to go to Galilee?

We have to make some additional assumptions here, which we do by bringing in the other gospel writers to clarify and enlarge on this passage. The disciples apparently did not go into Galilee right away. Rather, Jesus appeared to them in Jerusalem on the same day He rose from the dead (Jn. 20.19). At that time, He showed the proofs of His resurrection, and He rebuked the disciples for their unbelief (Jn. 20.20; Mk. 16.14). Had the women conveyed the message, and they just didn't take it seriously? That seems to have been the case, as we see from Luke 24.22-24.

Jesus appeared to the disciples after the two traveling to Emmaus returned to report about His resurrection (Lk. 24.33-36). He rebuked the disciples for their doubts, then took them to the Scriptures, opening their understanding and explaining to them why it was necessary for Him to die and rise again (Lk. 24.44-47).

So when Matthew reports, “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee,” we can, I think, conclude that Jesus had already appeared to them to show Himself alive, rebuke their unbelief, and reiterate the message given by the women. Galilee was the crossroads of the world, where the worlds of Jews and Gentiles came together. It was the appropriate setting for the Great Commission, with which Jesus would charge His disciples and us.

In Galilee, on the appointed mountain, when the disciples saw Him again, “they worshiped Him; but

some doubted” (v. 17). Doesn’t that describe most of us? We worship Jesus because we have come to know Him. But we still doubt the reliability of His Word or the seriousness of His calling: “How can we be witnesses?” “Who would listen to us?” “Won’t there be some risk involved?” “I’ve never done anything like this before.” All the usual hesitations and excuses. Just like the ones we hide behind.

We all need a little more of the faith of those faithful women, who saw Jesus, worshiped Him, heard His Word, embraced their mission, and carried it out, even in the face of doubts and unbelief by those who should have known better.

*Reflect.*

1. Why did Jesus rebuke His disciples? Does He ever rebuke you?
2. What can we learn from the women who bore Jesus’ message to the disciples?
3. How can believers help one another overcome their doubts about Jesus and His calling?

*This seems to me to be the last appearance in Galilee, when he sent them out to baptize. And if “some doubted,” herein again admire the Evangelists’ truthfulness. Even up to the last day, they were determined not to conceal even their own shortcomings. Nevertheless even these are assured by what they see. John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 90.2*

*I believe, Lord! Help my unbelief, so that today I will...*

*Pray Psalm 16.1-7, 10, 11.*

Seek the Presence of the Lord in prayer, and ask Him to go with you as you prepare to work your Personal Mission Field today.

*Sing Psalm 16.1-7, 10, 11.*

**Psalm 16.1-7, 10, 11** (All to Christ: [Jesus Paid It All](#))

Preserve me, O my God; I refuge seek in You.

You alone are all my good, my Lord and Savior true!

*Refrain v. 11*

Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand.

Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

The saints within the earth, majestic in their day,  
delight me with the worth of all they do and say.

*Refrain*

They endless tears shall weep who worship idols vain.

Their ways I will not keep, nor speak their empty names.

*Refrain*

My portion and my cup are You, my Savior dear;

You help and hold me up and ever keep me near.

*Refrain*

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night.

You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right.

*Refrain*

Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,  
You will come to gather me to my home with You in heav'n.

*Refrain*

## 6 Make Disciples

*Pray Psalm 22.23, 24.*

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,  
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;  
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;  
But when He cried to Him, He heard.

*Sing Psalm 22.23-25.*

(Darwall: [\*Rejoice, the Lord is King\*](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!  
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!  
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,  
nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.  
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

*Read Matthew 28.1-20; meditate on verses 18-20.*

*Prepare.*

1. What command did Jesus give His disciples?
2. What did Jesus promise them?

*Meditate.*

This very familiar passage – the Great Commission – is often understood as a charge for churches to support sending witnesses into distant fields. Let's take a look at this, back to front.

We can assume that these words, spoken to His disciples prior to His ascension, are, through them, spoken to us as well. We begin with Jesus' promise: He will be with us always, to the end of the age (v. 20). This is important for two reasons. First, because whatever Jesus commands us to do, He enables and empowers us to do by His Spirit, Who dwells within us (1 Thess. 5.23, 24). We need neither fear nor hesitate in going forward in whatever Jesus commands, because He is with us to enable us to accomplish whatever He calls us to do.

Second, Jesus is with us to oversee our obedience. He sees us at all times, searches hearts and minds, by His Spirit convicts us of disobedience, and prods, provokes, and urges us forward in all that He has commanded. We cannot ignore the command of Jesus and expect to know full and abundant life in Him. He gives us more of His salvation to the extent that we are daily faithful in whatever He commands. And since He is with us always, He knows how faithful – or unfaithful – we are at any moment.

Next, let's look at the scope of this mandate: "make disciples of all nations" (v. 19). That involves leading people to confess Jesus and be baptized into the Christian community, and teaching them all that Jesus has taught His disciples (v. 20). This is where many interpreters find the missions component. But what good is it to send and support missionaries to faraway places if we aren't

making disciples of the nation where we live? Or the community in which our church is located? Are not these as much a part of “all nations” as those distant lands we pay others to evangelize? Perhaps we need to invest more time, effort, and prayer in reaching the “all nations” that are in our and our church’s Personal Mission Field.

Many people fail to realize that the command in this passage is not “Go” but “make disciples”. The word “Go” is actually, in the Greek, “as you are going.” This describes the context for making the nations disciples. Most of us won’t be going to someplace over the seas any time soon. But we will be going to our workplace or school. We’ll be off to the grocery store or the doctor’s office. We’ll walk through our neighborhood, or have a meal with our family. We’ll go to church. Are these not part of the “as you are going” of every person’s life? We are seldom apart from people, and the object of our energies must be to help people become disciples – those who know Jesus, to grow in Him, and those who don’t, to hear of and experience His love.

As you are going, wherever you are going, whatever you’re doing, whomever you’re with, one overarching objective must define your life: “make disciples”. It’s what Jesus did, and it’s what He is sending us to do (Jn. 20.21).

“Yes,” you may object, “but that seems even more impossible than my going to some distant land as a missionary.” Perhaps. But remember: Jesus is with you. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him (v. 18), and He uses that authority to call, direct, and empower you to carry out His command.

Matthew’s book ends where it began, with “the nations” in focus. We saw them in Jesus’ genealogy, when the magi came to visit, and when all the kingdoms of the earth were proffered Him by Satan. Jesus could decline that offer and send the devil packing then, because He knew the nations would all be His one day, once His great work of redemption was complete, and His disciples were assembled in Galilee to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom.

As you are going, live and declare the Good News of Jesus. Immanuel has come. Now is the day of salvation. We are the agents of grace to a dying world. Make disciples.

*Reflect.*

1. How would you explain the idea of “as you are going” to a new believer?
2. What’s involved in the work of making disciples?
3. What can you do to know and draw strength from the Presence of Jesus with you always?

*He promised to be not only with these disciples but also with all who would subsequently believe after them. Jesus speaks to all believers as if to one body. Do not speak to me, he says, of the difficulties you will face, for “I am with you,” as the one who makes all things easy. John Chrysostom (344-407.), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 90.2**

*Help me as I am going today, Lord, so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 22.26-28.*

The Great Commission brings the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom to the world, beginning right where you are. Pray for each person in your Personal Mission Field, and ask the Lord to help you be more consistent in making disciples.

*Sing Psalm 22.26-28.*

**Psalm 22.26-28** (Darwall: [\*Rejoice, the Lord is King\*](#))

Then all the poor shall eat and praise with us the Lord.

Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.

Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;

all those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.

The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

## 7 A Call to Faithfulness

*Pray Psalm 22.29.*

All the prosperous of the earth  
Shall eat and worship;  
All those who go down to the dust  
Shall bow before Him,  
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

*Sing Psalm 22.29.*

*(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)*

All the prosp'rous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;  
bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.  
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

*Read and meditate on Matthew 28.1-20.*

*Prepare.*

1. Why is this chapter so important?
2. What is the Great Commission?

*Meditate.*

In Matthew 2, the world came to Jesus, to worship and adore Him. In chapter 28, Jesus sent His disciples into the world with the Good News of the Kingdom of God. In between those chapters, Jesus fulfilled His earthly calling to take away the sins of the world and open the door to eternal fellowship with the Father.

No lies of the devil, powers of demons, schemes of men, or force of arms could keep Jesus from fulfilling His calling. And none of these can keep His love from us, or us from fulfilling what He has appointed for us to do. In his gospel, Matthew has fulfilled a portion of what the Lord assigned him – to teach all things whatsoever Jesus taught, so that the Good News might come down to us today. We are the link between Jesus, Matthew, and generations of faithful witnesses to the generations that will succeed us. We must not fail to take up our calling.

The women who saw Jesus alive from the dead were faithful to their appointed task. The disciples who met with Him in Galilee proved faithful in theirs. Matthew's gospel ends like a gauntlet thrown down at our feet. Or better, an invitation to full and abundant life, following Jesus and obeying His will to make all the nations disciples. Jesus Who issued the Great Commission is watching us. But even more, He is with us *always*. He will grant us everything we need to be faithful in our generation.

But we must embrace making disciples as the “as-you-are-going” and defining motif of our lives. The world may despise or mock us, but the world needs what only Christians can offer – forgiveness, eternal life, and a calling fraught with eternal significance here and now. As we conclude our study of Matthew's gospel, I encourage you to embrace your calling all over again in prayer, and commit yourself day by day to seeking the Kingdom in an as-you-are-going life of making disciples and glorifying God.

*Reflect.*

1. What does it mean for us to be faithful in our generation?
2. We remember that “the end of the age” is coming. What should we be doing until then?
3. How can believers encourage and help one another in being faithful to our calling?

*He is in effect saying, “These difficult things that you will undergo are soon to be finished with this present life. For this world will come to an end. But the good things you are to enjoy are immortal, as I have often told you before.” Having invigorated and roused their minds by the remembrance of that coming day, he sent them out. Those who live faithfully, with good works, should strangely desire that day even as those who lack good works should fear it. So let us not fear and shudder. Let us repent while there is opportunity. Let us rise out of our sins. We can by grace, if we are willing.*  
John Chrysostom (344-407), *Gospel of Matthew, Homily 90.2*

*I go forth today, Lord, to make disciples in my Personal Mission Field. Help me to...*

*Pray Psalm 22.30, 31.*

Prepare in prayer for opportunities to talk about Jesus today. Encourage your fellow believers, serve the lost, and look to Jesus to be with you as you are going.

*Sing Psalm 22.30, 31.*

**Psalm 22.30, 31** (Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;

let them to all nations call, “Bow before His holy face!”

Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus’ saving worth!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. What does faithfulness require of Jesus' disciples today?
2. What is the Gospel of the Kingdom? What are its main points?
3. How can you improve in your calling to make disciples as you are going?
4. What can you do to realize more of the Presence of Jesus, with you always?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 28.1-20? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.