



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address** : Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address** : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
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**Website** : [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

July 26, 2009

**Theme: The Great Commission**

**Text: Matthew 28:16-20**

We have now reached the climax of Matthew's Gospel. For Matthew, the resurrection is not the climax of the Gospel. The climax of the Gospel for him is what we call the Great Commission. The Great Commission is Jesus' commandment that His disciples should disciple the nations by teaching people from every people group on earth what he had taught them. In Matthew's Gospel, these are the last words of the risen Jesus to his disciples. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew is telling us that these were among the most important words that Jesus had spoken. Therefore, we must pay attention to them.

The resurrection itself tells us that the Messiah who humbled Himself to become human and who permitted Himself to be humiliated through the crucifixion, is now Lord of the Universe. To call Jesus Lord is to say that we must obey Him. The risen Jesus had commanded the apostles to meet him on a certain mountain in Galilee and they obey him. Even though they can barely believe that he is alive, they do what he has told them to do. When they meet with him arrive at the mountain where he had told them to go, they see Him and worship Him—but some doubt. This statement has puzzled commentators. How could Jesus' disciples see him and yet doubt at the same time? In the rest of the Gospel, different words are used to speak of unbelief. It may be that the disciples believed that he was alive but that they were not sure how to respond to the presence of the risen Jesus among them. Matthew tells us that worship and obedience are the proper responses of disciples to the risen Lord. We must worship and obey.

The first words in the Great Commission are these: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore, go..." Jesus begins with and emphasis upon His authority because we live in an uncertain world. We wonder about how effective our new president will be in leading our nations out of the economic recession that we face. We wonder about world terrorism and when the next attack on American soil will be. The great uncertainties that face us can generate fear in our hearts. True spirituality should reveal itself in our obedience to Jesus' command. Fear paralyzes true spirituality. Jesus is saying that even though it may not seem to be true, He is now the Sovereign Lord over the whole world and everything that happens in it. The King of the Jews has become the King of the World. If Jesus had not spoken these words, that little group of followers would have been overwhelmed by the task that Jesus gave them to do.

It is only after Jesus has spoken these great words of assurance that he gives his famous command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." The first word in the Greek sentence is the word, "Go." We are to be going disciples. When we think about it,



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we go every day. Every day we go out into a world where so many people do not know Jesus as Lord. When we go, we should be consciously seeking ways to get in touch with those who are not disciples. The next command that Jesus gives is the command to make disciples. This is the central command of this passage. The word, "disciple," means, "learner." We are to go and invite people to learn about Jesus Christ. But the idea of the learner also contains the idea that the learning person is one who believes that Jesus is Lord and has risen from the dead. Jesus commands us to lead people to a place of trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and to lead them into a life of continual learning about who he is and what he requires from believers.

It is important that Jesus commanded us to disciple the nations. The word that is translated, "nations," is sometimes translated, "Gentiles." It is the word that gives us the English word, "ethnic." Jesus is not speaking specifically about nation-states like the USA, Mexico, or China. He is speaking about ethnic groups. In the US, for example we have many ethnic groups. We have Caucasians, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and others. Jesus commands the church to make disciples of every ethnic group on earth. This command fulfills the promise that God had made to Abraham in the book of Genesis: that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. People receive the blessing that God promised to Abraham when they bow to Christ as Lord.

When a person has bowed to Jesus as Lord, we are to baptize him or her. The Greek word means to immerse something into water or some other form of liquid. This means that immersion is the most appropriate way to baptize a person and the way that we prefer at St. Paul's. However, we leave the choice up to the person being baptized even though we prefer immersion. Baptism is the person's public testimony that they have acknowledged Jesus as Lord and that they intend to obey His teaching. It also symbolizes the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The last thing to notice about Jesus' command to baptize is that baptism is to be in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is a clear statement of the Trinity in the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus final command is that we teach disciples everything that he has commanded us. Being a disciple of Jesus, means more than praying a prayer in order to receive a free ticket to heaven. A true disciple of Jesus understands that they must continue to learn about Jesus and His teaching for the rest of their lives on earth. The mark of a true disciple is that he or she is living a life of ever-increasing obedience to Jesus.

Jesus begins the Great Commission with a declaration of His authority. He ends it with the promise of his presence. Literally, He says that He will be with us "all the days until the close of the age." This reminds us of some famous words that were written by his great ancestor, King David, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This promise is also a claim by the risen Jesus to be equal to God. The normal Jew would have believed that only God



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can be present everywhere and always with his people. In His final words, Matthew records Jesus' final claim to deity, and his final invitation to us to worship and obey Him