

## **“Let’s make disciples!” Mat 28:16-20**

**Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

We just read the very end of the gospel according Matthew. So called the Great Commission. Making disciples, by means of baptizing and teaching them everything that Jesus commanded. It is the end of Matthews account, but at the same time it is the beginning for us.

How so? For we are a part of this account. Yes, each of you. We all live in this time between Jesus giving of this commission and the end of the age. We live in between Jesus ascension and His second return at the end of ages. Thus this Jesus commission of making disciples applies to us directly. To each of us.

As the consequence we need to understand as clearly as possible what exactly Jesus commands us to do and how can we do it. Upon these two questions we are going to meditate today. What exactly Jesus commands us, and how can we do it?

What exactly Jesus commands us to do? To understand it better we need to take a look how the Bible portrays disciple making? The person we need to look at is Jesus Himself.

In His Great Commission Jesus said ‘go and make’. We often tend to focus on the first of them on ‘go’. As a result there is this idea of going around, which is not exactly what Jesus meant.

Of course, apostles were sent to make disciples of all nations and it implies some kind of moving around, but the focus is not on going as such, but on the fact, that initiative for making disciples has to come from us. We can rephrase ‘go and make’ by saying ‘let us make disciples’.

Gospels describe how Jesus gathered His first disciples. They didn’t come to Him. He went to them. He called them. The Son of God came looking for us and to call us to Himself. This is how He did with His first disciples, and this is where the emphasis in ‘go’ lays.

We are not to sit and wait until someone decides to become Jesus disciple. No, we are to make a first move. As the Father sent the Son, the same way Jesus sent His

disciples. The same way they made and sent the next generation of disciples, and the next and the next.

We didn't come to be Jesus disciples on our own either. Someone was sent to us, to make us Jesus disciples. Our parents, our friends, someone else. Someone, who was sent by Jesus for your sake. You are here, as chosen by God, only because someone faithfully carried out Jesus command.

You are God's chosen ones. Each of you. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. In Jesus He has chosen you to be with Him. That's an incredible gift. Underserved and precious gift.

There is something interesting we can learn from Jesus way of choosing disciples. I believe, when it comes to choosing and calling disciples, we would prefer to have perfect disciples. Right? At least as perfect as possible. Really good people.

What did Jesus do? How did He choose His disciples? He is God, and obviously He knows our hearts. With all of this you would expect that He could pick perfect disciples. Right? Did He? No! He didn't. He picked men who exhibited the same characteristics we so much don't like in others.

Sometimes they were arrogant, sometimes they acted like cowards, sometimes they were foolish, sometimes greedy, sometimes angry, sometimes power-thirsty, sometimes unforgiving. Would you choose disciples who have these traits? Preferably not.

But you know, if Jesus had followed our thinking, if He had been looking for perfect disciples, He hadn't chosen those twelve, but then - He hadn't chosen us either. None of us. He indeed sees our hearts. He knows what we have inside of us. If purity of our hearts was Jesus criteria, He wouldn't find disciples among us.

These are great news for us, indeed. Being perfect, isn't Jesus requirement for us to become His disciples. As Jesus Himself said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mat 9:13)

Jesus didn't come to gather into His Church only nice people, He came to call those who need His restoration, His healing presence. Those who are corrupted, crippled and wounded, devastated, burdened by sin. Those, from whom we often prefer to turn away.

He came to restore His much loved, but broken creation. We need to use these guidelines when we are looking for Jesus disciples. We need to look for those, who need Jesus help the most. And usually they are people, whose character, or values, or lifestyle, or history does not exactly correspond to God's design for our lives.

But we are sent to all of them. To make them disciples of Jesus. And to be honest, we all and all the people we know fit in these categories. The more there is brokenness, the more there is a need healing and for restoration.

*How are we supposed to make these disciples?* Jesus instruction is clear. Baptizing and teaching. We may wonder how does baptism helps us in making new disciples? Remember, we didn't choose Jesus, He chose us. When we come to baptism, this is another expression of God grace, another underserved gift for us.

True God comes to us and wants to be our God. In our baptism new reality is created. In Holy Baptism, Triune God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit accepts us as His children.

He purifies us from our sins and indwells in us. Our baptism is about creating new relationships of trust, love, obedience. Essentially by means of baptism God restores what was broken by the Fall. He brings us back into His family. He does it all. Of course, God does it through us, but essentially that's His work.

*Teaching.* Sometimes we tend to forget that there are two pieces in making someone Jesus disciple. Baptizing and teaching. They both together make one whole. They both are two essential parts of making disciples.

We can try to explain it with a family analogy. By means of baptism we are made children of our Heavenly Father. That's a gift. We don't deserve it, we can't demand it, there is no way we can obtain it on our own.

But then, when you are made a member of divine family, when you are made God's heir, there are certain standards you need to follow. If you are a child of royal father, of course, He expects you to live accordingly. So that your whole life would reflect your new identity. God's sons or daughters. His heirs.

This is why teaching part is so important. That's why Jesus said 'teaching everything I commanded you'. We are talking about a whole new life, the new life with this new identity, living as Jesus disciples, as children of the Father.

What does it mean? It means that each disciple of Jesus, each of us steps of the path of life-long learning. Learning from words of Jesus. Learning not just with our mind, but with our heart, learning to live different life.

To follow Jesus doesn't mean that you need to change your vocations, no, it means that you will continue in them, just differently. As one who is sent to serve all people in your life. You have to learn how to be a child, a sibling, a spouse, a parent, a friend, an employers and so on living as Jesus disciple. There are no easy answers.

Besides, when we learn how to follow Jesus, we need to be clear that it will be costly road. We'll have to say 'no' to many things. We'll have to say 'no' to loving ourselves more than anything, and 'yes' to considering others as more important.

We'll have to say 'no' to our pride and self-righteousness, and 'yes' to humility and service.

As I said, this is a life-long learning process, where Jesus Himself teaches us, through His word, - through preaching, through studying of His Word. With every year of our lives we can learn more and more what God's will for our lives is, but then, with every day there will be new and new situations, new challenges where we'll need whole wisdom and patience of God to live as His disciples.

Thus inevitable question arises, and this is our second question for today, - *how can we do this?* We, imperfect creatures, ourselves broken in so many ways. How in the world we can do it? Good question. Honest answer is – on our own we can't do it.

Because according to our fallen nature we want to love ourselves more than anything. Not God, not Jesus, and not people in our lives. We want to consider ourselves more important than others. That's how it is, even if we know what is right. As apostle Paul put it: "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." (Rom 7:19)

This is why the Great Commission comes together with great promise. "I'm with you till the end of the age." I'm with you. This is this part where Matthew's story becomes also our story. Who says these words?

Who give us this promise? Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? The one to whom all authority is given in heaven and on earth. The one who is in control over entire creation.

And this is what He promises you – I'm with you till the end of the age. He is with you, with each of you to help you to carry on this Great Commission. Frankly speaking, we can't even comprehend the gravity of this promise.

We won't be able to comprehend it till the end of our days. For in this promise the whole mystery of Triune God is open to us. We can only pray that the Holy Spirit would help us to find peace, joy and strengths in this promise, to grasp it as much as we can with our finite and imperfect faculties.

In this promise Triune God undertakes to be with you and to help you. Just think about it for a while. Who is this One who promises you His presence? God the Father, your Creator. He promises to provide for your daily needs. To protect you from all evil, so that you can do what Jesus calls you to do.

Also God the Son, your Redeemer. He gives you peace and good conscience. In Him you have forgiveness of all your sins. Through Him you are restored into God's family. You don't need to worry what God's attitude towards you is, you can focus on living as Jesus disciple and making others His disciples.

Finally, God the Holy Spirit is your Helper. That's true, our tasks as Jesus disciples are very hard, none of us has what it takes. But we are not alone. The Holy Spirit comes to us and dwells with us.

I'm with you till the end of the ages. He not only helps us to understand what it means to be Jesus disciple in our situation, but He also changes our hearts, so that we desire what is good and right in God's eyes.

The Holy Spirit helps us to love people in our lives, not with words, but with deeds. He brings us continually back to Jesus, reminds us about our new identity, disciples of Jesus. He gives you joy to life as a child of God, for this is what you are created to be.

When we reflect on what these words of Jesus mean, we can see how the end of Matthew's gospel account shapes and defines our lives. We are made Jesus disciples in our baptism and we are being taught, and we keep learning how to live as His disciples.

Also, we are sent, to make more disciples from among those which God has put in our lives. This is why we are here. For their sake. And we have this wonderful promise, that true God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, will be with us till the end of the ages helping us with this Great Commission.

What remains? Let's do it by the grace of Triune God.

Amen.