

April 20, 2025

“The Resurrection and the Commission”
Matthew 28:16-20

FCF: Resurrection fact. Meaning?

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus is the risen King.
(magnet) We must heed His commission.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

The resurrection of Jesus was an event in time and space. It was not a case of a mass hallucination, wish fulfillment, or a grand conspiracy. Each of those theories has been repeatedly proposed and readily debunked. It was a shocking event. But shocking as it was, it was no less real. The lines of evidence are clear, pointing to its historicity, to the fact of the Resurrection.

But this morning our focus is not so much on the fact of the Resurrection but its meaning. Let's assume for a moment that you believe that Jesus really did rise from the dead. Why is that vital? Why is that important? What is its significance? This brings us to the Great Commission.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 28:16-20**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Big events have big effects. Think of the invention of the steam engine, the creation of the polio vaccine, the success of the Apollo space program. Great events with great effect. But the greatest event with the greatest effect was the Resurrection of Jesus. How so? The Resurrection gives us hope in the face of death. It gives us assurance amidst our suffering. It affirms the physical realm, showing we need to care for both our bodies and the environment.

Those are all huge implications. And there are many more. But as we focus on our text, we see a connection between the Resurrection and this Great Commission. It's far more than just a sequel. The Commission is a consequence of the Resurrection. The one flows directly from the other. We need to understand that Matthew is clearly being intentional here. He's quite selective in what he records. This is his focus, highlighting this particular appearance of Jesus to His disciples. And by recording just this one, it's as though he's saying to us, "Don't miss this."

Matthew wants us to see that the Resurrection and the Great Commission are closely wed together. For Jesus is the risen King. He is no longer in the grave. Look inside. The tomb is empty. He is risen! Jesus is the risen King. And so we must then heed His commission.

Now what would that mean? It means we must heed these three things. First, the authority of the King. Second, the assignment from the King. Third, the assurance by the King.

I. THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING

First, the authority of the King (READ Matthew 28:16-18). Jesus rules over all.

A) The Source

1. Not taken

Where does He get this authority? What is its source? It is not taken through coup or conquest.

2. But given

It is not taken. It is given. This is a fulfillment of Psalm 110. The Son of Man has come before the Ancient of Days and received universal power and everlasting dominion. And it was given.

B) The Scope

1. No longer constrained

But how far does this authority reach? What is its scope? It is no longer constrained or hemmed in. Before Easter, the spheres in which Jesus showed His rule were limited. No more. No more.

2. But now cosmic

Now He has absolute rule over “heaven and earth” - all that there is from the nearest atom to the farthest star. Every moment and matter, problem and purpose - He holds all things together.

Such is the authority given to Jesus. Such is the rule of the risen King.

Illustration:

All power and authority rests with Jesus. He is the King of kings, Lord of lords. Now that might make you nervous. Power often comes with side effects. It intoxicates. It blinds. Recent studies indicate it's a bit like a TBI. Power makes us more impulsive, less risk-aware. It robs us of empathy. Some refer to this as the “power paradox”. That is, once we have it, we lose the capacities we once needed to gain it. Power can corrupt most anyone. Except one - Jesus.

Application:

With Jesus, we see power incorruptible and authority immeasurable. It reaches as wide and far as it is high. What does this mean for followers of Jesus, for citizens of His kingdom?

It means we go forth, knowing who sent us and who we represent. Which, taken to heart, should both deeply humble us and greatly embolden us. Think with me. As ambassadors of this King, we must then go without arrogance but without apology. Both softened and steeled.

No matter the setting. We are to represent Jesus, bearing His name in the classroom, the locker room, the boardroom, the living room. We are to represent Him and His interests at work and play, during the week and the weekend. Again, what did He say? (**READ Matthew 28:18b**)

Such is Jesus' authority. He is the risen King. We must then heed His commission.

II. THE ASSIGNMENT FROM THE KING

Which brings us to the assignment. What is it we are to do? (**READ Matthew 28:19-20a**)

A) The Focus

1. One command

Let's consider the focus of this commission. In the English, it looks like there are four separate commands here. But there's actually just one in the Greek. We are called to make disciples.

2. Its meaning

What does that mean? Well, a disciple is someone who has heard the call of Jesus and responded by repenting, believing the Gospel, and following Him. He or she is a follower, a student, an

apprentice of Jesus. That is a disciple. So to make disciples would mean our task is to herald the Gospel message with our words and lives, longing to then lead new believers into maturity.

B) The Process

1. The means

That's our task. What does it look like? That takes us from the focus to the process, from the imperative to the participles. There are three. We are to go - not waiting but initiating. We are to baptize - encouraging a public confession of Jesus as Lord. We are to teach - helping folks to take in and live out everything Jesus says. And we must teach all He says - what is acceptable and the things that will get us cancelled, the things folks want to hear and the things they don't.

2. The range

That's what this looks like, the means of the commission. Now how far do we go? The Lord of all sends us to all, to all nations. All need to hear. And Jesus is worthy of praise from all.

That's the assignment from the King - its focus and its process, both the what and how.

Illustration:

Of course, we all struggle a bit in taking Jesus at His word. That is, hearing and heeding what He says in its fullness and not just a portion (the part we like) and then massaging it a bit from there. It's like King Saul. In 1 Samuel 13, he took it upon himself to offer sacrifices, a duty reserved for priests. In 1 Samuel 15, God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, but Saul spared their king and kept the best of their livestock. Saul was listening. Sort of, anyway.

Application:

Which should sober us. How so? Think again of this assignment. We are to have a heart for all nations. But think how often we block out someone closer to home. "Not her, not after what she did." "Not him. Don't you know his story?" "Not them. They vote the wrong way."

As we read the New Testament, we can see that the early church struggled with this - drawing lines where there are none to be drawn, robbing people of the Gospel and Jesus of His glory. And we do the same - folks on the Left and the Right, viewers of both MSNBC and NewsMax. But the Gospel is to go to all peoples, ignoring and crossing all such boundaries. Now I know that some of you think I'm just being cute here. But how do we really see people?

Such is Jesus' assignment. He is the risen King. We must then heed His commission.

III. THE ASSURANCE BY THE KING

Which brings us to this assurance by the King (**READ Matthew 28:18-20**). This commission is great in importance and immense in its task. So great it should make us stagger.

A) The Promise

1. Familiar words

So Jesus gives us a promise. The words may be familiar. "Immanuel" - God with His people. It was foreshadowed with the Tabernacle and the Temple. The prophets spoke of it. In the first

chapter of Matthew, we hear the words of the angel to Joseph about the child Mary was carrying. And now, here in the last chapter of Matthew, we hear it again. “Immanuel” - God with us.

2. A wondrous thing

This is a wondrous thing. “Go for I am with you”. Quite a reason. And an encouragement!

B) The Extent

1. The duration of the command

That’s the wonder of the promise. Which is matched only by its extent. There is no expiration date on this. The commission stretches out over the horizon. But then so too does the assurance.

2. The breadth of the comfort

The abiding duration of the command is coupled with the abiding breadth of the comfort. Jesus says, “And behold, I am with you *all the days*, to the end of the age.” In all things, at all times.

Oh, that we would hear and know the assurance of the King - the promise and its extent.

Application:

Four times in this passage, we hear the word “all”. Did you catch it? All authority, to all nations, hearing all His commands, and then with us all the days. This is utterly exhaustive, completely comprehensive. What does that mean? There is never a time we are on our own. And so there is never a time we need to look to ourselves, exalting our ideas and abilities. We need never go to that empty well. For followers of Jesus, our trust and assurance is in Jesus.

Think with me for a moment. When are you tempted to believe that you are on your own? What’s the topic? What’s the concern? What’s the situation? What’s the struggle such that your default setting tells you that it’s up to you and no one else? Do you have something in mind? Okay. Now hold that. What if that wasn’t true? What if the King’s word to you is real?

Such is His assurance. Jesus is the risen King. Listen to His commission, all of it.

CONCLUSION:

Why is this so important? Let me share this news article from a few years ago ([READ](#)):

Last summer, 53-year-old Jeff Murphy was hiking in Yellowstone National Park when he disappeared. Park investigators found his body on June 9, where Murphy had fallen 500 feet from Turkey Pen Peak, after accidentally stepping into a chute.

But he wasn't on just any hike. He was [looking for a treasure box of gold and jewels](#) worth up to \$2 million, buried somewhere in the Rocky Mountains by an eccentric millionaire named Forrest Fenn.

Fenn, an art dealer and millionaire in his 80s, lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In his self-published memoir, Fenn included a poem that supposedly leads to the treasure he hid in the mountains.

"The ornate, Romanesque box is 10-by-10 inches and weighs about 40 pounds when loaded," NPR's John Burnett reported in 2016. "Fenn has only revealed that it is hidden in the Rocky Mountains, somewhere between Santa Fe and the Canadian border at an elevation above 5,000 feet. It's not in a mine, a graveyard, or near a structure." Murphy is the fourth man to die while searching for the chest.

Ultimately, Jeff Murphy was looking for purpose. He was simply looking in the wrong place.

Not unlike many of us. Studies show that having meaning benefits us psychologically and spiritually. And physically as well. It can lower stress hormones and heart inflammation. It can slow the impact of Alzheimer’s. And we don’t need to search for it. We don’t need to run our lives into the wilderness. It doesn’t demand an exhaustive search. Jesus is telling us.

Jesus is the King. He is risen and has given us a commission. May we hear it.

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