

The Yoke of Evangelism
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Text: Matthew 28:16-20

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Theme: To live the great commission is the natural outcome of taking on Jesus’ yoke. We can do this because he is, and always will be, with us!

Throughout Lent we have been reflecting on Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11, and what it means to live lightly.

Jesus began by saying, 27 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

And then he extends this invitation.

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The challenge for us this morning is hear Jesus’ great commission as the natural outcome of this Matthew 11 invitation instead of the way we usually hear it: As a HUGE responsibility and burden.

Whenever I find myself with this text, I recall the words of a congregant after I preached a sermon about evangelism. “I know you didn’t say it,” she began. “And I know you didn’t even mean it. But as I listened to your sermon, all I could think is that you expect us to go out and knock on doors.”

I loved her honesty! She knew I didn’t say. She knew I wasn’t even implying it. But still – she was convinced that if we are to do what we are supposed to do, what Jesus expects us to do and requires us to do – then we have to do things we would NEVER want to do, like proselytize door-to-door.

But not only did I NOT expect her (or you) to live out the Great Sales Pitch, Jesus didn’t intend that either:

It makes sense that we see the Commission as Great – even daunting.

The five “alls” of the Great Commission

All authority has been given to me

Move out and disciple all the nations

Baptizing them into the name of [all] of God (triune)

Teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

And remember I will be with you all the days, to the end of the world.

But all nations? The Abrahamic promise to be a blessing to all nations now implodes again and is flung out to its final and renewed form into the whole wide world.

It is a enormous, even overwhelming task if we believed that Jesus ever intended for us to do it in our strength and out of our own resources.

Instead notice this:

The usual missionary terms – preach, convert, win – are not used, but a more scholarly word: Disciple. Make students of, bring to school, educate. “Work with the people over time in the educative process of teaching Jesus.” Cuz only Jesus can convert, win, bring to repentance, save.

And notice also the flow of the text:

Notice the flow of the text:

I, Jesus am in charge around here

So you move out, obeying me

I, Jesus, will support you all the way – relax and enjoy!

Jesus' authority and presence support the Great Commission. Jesus' grace precedes, accompanies, and follows disciples' obedience; the indicative of Christ's strength goes before, alongside, and after the imperative of disciples' responsibilities. We are covered, supported, and surrounded.

Punchline: To live the great commission is the natural outcome of taking on Jesus' yoke. We can do this because he is, and always will be, with us!

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