

**MATTHEW 28:18-20**  
**BECOMING THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:**  
**PRACTISING WITNESSING**

“Jesus came and said to [the disciples], ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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.’”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps you have heard the story of the fellow whose drive to work was interrupted by a developing tragedy. As he approached a bridge, he saw a man poised, ready to jump from the bridge. Being a conscientious follower of Christ, he stopped his car and called out to the man contemplating suicide. “Don’t jump!”

The pending jumper said, “I don’t have anything to live for. I’m going to end it all”

Thinking quickly, the man who intervened in his threatened suicide decided to attempt to find some common ground from which to work. “Are you religious?” he asked the jumper.

The jumper replied, “Yes.”

“Me too,” said the Good Samaritan. “Catholic or Protestant?”

“Protestant.”

“Me too! Are you Anglican or Baptist?”

“Baptist.”

Growing somewhat excited, the Good Samaritan exclaimed, “Wow! Me too! Fellowship Baptist or Southern Baptist?”

Growing somewhat animated, the jumper stated, “Southern Baptist.”

“Man, that is exciting. Me too. Conservative or Moderate?”

“Conservative.”

“Man, that is great. Me too. Open Communion or Closed Communion?”

“Closed.”

“Wow! It’s great to meet someone that agrees on so much. Reformed or Armenian?”

“Armenian.”

With that, the erstwhile rescuer gives the man a shove and says, “Die, heretic scum.”

We want to place everyone in a box; we are more comfortable if we believe we are able to categorise people. When we categorise people, we find it much easier to ignore some and focus on others who we imagine to be actually unworthy of our attention. While the world about us will place us in their boxes, we must resist playing that game. Rather, as followers of the Risen Son of God, we must see all we meet as individuals in need of the message of life entrusted to us by Him whom we call “Master.” If we will become the Community of Faith, we must practise witnessing.

I am almost hesitant to speak from this particular text. It is so well-known among the people of God that it is almost arrogant to imagine that I can add anything to what you know of the Master’s words. However, there may be younger Christians who have not heard, or there may be older saints who have forgotten what they knew, or we may need encouragement to do what we are appointed to do. Therefore, I must appeal to the Words of Jesus in this text.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**FIRST THINGS** — In order to understand the challenge we face as Christians in this brave, new world, we must understand the culture in which we live. This world has undergone what is popularly referred to as a paradigm shift. Among the changes witnessed during these past few years is the deliberate effort to erase the very name “Christian.” Younger believers do not want the name “Christian” because of the baggage that accompanies the label. This leads me to ask, “Why is the most ethical, the most humane movement in two thousand years of Western history now something of which we are to be ashamed?”

The world is opposed to the Faith, speaking incessantly against the Faith. Somehow, the idea that Christianity stands in the way of a better future for mankind has gained credence. Therefore, we witness changes in language and in attitudes as the churches engage in a futile effort to be attractive to the world.<sup>2</sup> A prevailing attitude evident among our contemporaries is that *silence is a virtue*. Though the churches still serve as hospitals for the hurting, large portions of evangelicalism have grown silent. Believers dare not speak the name of Christ lest we be shamed as haters, as bigots, as phobic about one group or another within society.

I am concerned by the popularity of this attitude among the faithful, and the more so when I hear the Master say, “Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” [MARK 8:38]. I do not know all that is entailed in Christ’s shame concerning silent Christians, but neither am I anxious to discover what could be meant.

Similarly, the community of the faithful is pressured to *avoid hot-button issues*. Pastors must not speak of the pet sins of contemporary society or even register disapproval of any of the favoured evils of the day. Christians are told that we are responsible to produce deeds, not creeds. So, increasingly, the Zion of Christ invents a non-offensive Gospel, limiting the witness of the faithful to such endeavours as socio-economic issues and environmental issues. There is little to distinguish too many of our contemporary churches from any other advocacy group. The Facebook generation wants to throw out a few pious sentiments about Jesus, but we dare not intimate that God holds sinners responsible for their own actions or that He shall judge mankind.

The Good News is offensive to the lost because it strips away every vestige of goodness. Jesus, our example, came with a message of repentance. He did not call men to perform good deeds in order to be acceptable to God; He called sinners to turn from their wickedness, embracing the life that He alone can provide. On one occasion, some individuals spoke of a tragedy that had just occurred. They were stunned when Jesus responded to their suggestion that He condemn the dead as wicked. Jesus said, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” [LUKE 13:2-5].

With the pressure from younger individuals who are seldom grounded in the Faith, we hear arguments that we are to have *the right label*. We are to be “Jesus followers,” not “Christians.” Cultural adaptation leads us to absorb the culture’s good, life-enhancing, progressive agenda. Rather than seeking to see people saved, we are told to affirm them. We are urged to become friends with the world, making those in the world feel good about themselves even as we labour to feel good about ourselves.

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<sup>2</sup> The following points are taken from Peter Jones, “Culture Warts or Faithful Servants? Part 1,” September 12, 2012, <http://truthxchange.com/articles/2012/09/12/culture-warts-or-faithful-servants-part-1/>, accessed 22 July 2017

Before embracing this view of life, shouldn't we hear the cautionary warning presented in the Word. We read, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" [ROMANS 12:1, 2]. Shouldn't we take to heart the warning James wrote? "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" [JAMES 4:4].

Again, society pressures the faithful to *seek cultural approval*. The argument is that opposition to the Faith will disappear if the churches will only down-play law, sin, the Cross and personal salvation. Have we actually forgotten the warning spoken by the Master? Jesus said, "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets" [LUKE 6:26]. Read together with Jesus' words recorded in John's Gospel, we should be deeply concerned. "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" [JOHN 15:19].

Christianity—the true Faith of Christ the Lord—has never been popular. Jesus warned, "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you do not belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you. Remember what I told you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they obeyed my word, they will obey yours too. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me" [JOHN 15:18-21 NET BIBLE].

Let me warn you that we are not to seek to be popular with the world, we are to seek to honour Him whom we call "Master." Our purpose is not to be loved by the denizens inhabiting this dying world; our purpose is to reveal the love of God to those living in the world. That love is not a saccharine, syrupy, cloying sentimentality—it is love that serves others even as it points to life in the Risen Son of God. Our purpose is not to show the world "a better way to live," our purpose is to point those identified as belonging to the world to the only way of life.

**WE ARE FOLLOWERS OF THE CHRIST** — I am speaking to followers of the Risen Christ. Individuals who have never been born from above are lost. God distinguishes between redeemed and lost when He says, "Whoever believes in [Christ] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" [JOHN 3:18]. Those who have never believed in the Son of God are even now under sentence of death, just as the Word declares. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" [JOHN 3:36].

I say this, not in judgement of anyone, for I am not the judge of any individual; rather, I say this to warn those who are outside of the grace of God so that they might turn and be saved. Our purpose is to declare the grace of God for all who will receive that grace. We call individuals to turn from pursuing life on their own terms to accept life on God's terms. The Living God now "commands all people everywhere to repent" [see ACTS 17:30].

The Apostle to the Gentiles presented the missionaries in terms which we also employ. "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" [2 CORINTHIANS 5:20]. We have received a message of reconciliation, a message of life, a message of hope. As followers of the Prince of Peace, we deliver a message of peace to all who will receive it.

Early in the history of the Faithful, those who were opposed to them and to the message with which they were entrusted called them “Christians,” “Little Christs.” It was a term or derision meant to belittle believers and the One they followed. These first believers spoke of themselves as followers of “the Way” [see **ACTS 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22**]. The term could have been adopted from Jesus’ assertion to Thomas, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” [**JOHN 14:6**].

Some years after the Master had risen from the grave and had ascended into the heavens, an unknown author penned these words that speak of our life as Christians who follow Jesus. “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” [**HEBREWS 10:19-25**].

We who follow the Master walk a new and living way—a way that He opened for us. We now follow a path that leads to the throne of God Himself. Followers of the Way, indeed! We are those who have been instructed in “the way of the Lord” [see **ACTS 18:25**]. Now, we sit under the teaching of the Word so that we may be more accurately instructed in “the way of God” [see **ACTS 18:26**].

It was perhaps as many as ten years after the Resurrection of the Master that believers began to be called by the Name of Christ. Luke tells us of the first use of “Christian” to describe the followers of Christ when he wrote, “In Antioch the disciples were first called Christians” [**ACTS 11:26b**]. However, the name was too good not to seize the term as descriptive of who they were. Those opposed to the Master thought they could ridicule His followers by calling them “Christians;” but those first disciples realised that it was an apt description of who they were. They believed the message of life, and therefore, they were those who were following the Christ. The message we present is the message we received from Him whom we call “Lord.”

Gathered on the mountain from which Jesus would ascend into the glory were the eleven disciples. The eleven, mentioned though unnamed in **MATTHEW 28:16**, were followers of the Christ. Those eleven included, “Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James” [**ACTS 1:13**].

We honour these eleven as disciples of the Master, but no less are we disciples when we follow the Master in this day. Though we may not go to a mountain outside of Jerusalem, we do go to the Cross and to the empty tomb. The Apostle’s words apply to us as followers of the Christ. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” [**ROMANS 6:3, 4**].

Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples” [**JOHN 8:31**]. Later, the Master prepared His disciples for His exodus, teaching them, and thus, teaching us in the same way, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” [**JOHN 13:35**]. A disciple is one who has accepted the discipline of learning from a teacher. Jesus is our Great Teacher. Whatever He says, we are prepared to do.

**OUR LORD HAS RECEIVED ALL AUTHORITY** — Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore” [MATTHEW 28:18, 19a]. If we are followers of the Christ, we are responsible to do the things He commands. Surely, this command, which we know as the Great Commission, is incumbent upon each believer. However, as some have intimated, the Great Commission has become the great omission for many professed Christians.

When we study the New Testament, it is striking to note that almost without exception, each appearance of Jesus ends with Him telling those present to announce the Good News. Jesus made at least ten post-resurrection appearances plus other appearances to Paul some years after His ascension. In eight of these appearances, the Lord gives an explicit commission; and in five of these appearances, He commands His followers to go into all the world, preaching the Gospel.

Matthew doesn’t actually conclude the Gospel by speaking of Christ’s ascension. Rather, Matthew ends the Gospel by telling readers of the Master’s commission. It appears that Matthew realised, as should each of us, that witnessing to others was the core of life as a disciple. Jesus’ death and resurrection must be central to the life of a disciple. Each disciple is charged with telling others, bringing them into the fellowship of a congregation and instructing them in the truths of life as a disciple of the Living Son of God.

Have we forgotten the command of the Master? Or have we grown indifferent? Do we seek a more convenient service? Or are we uncomfortable living as though He is Lord of life? Whatever our excuse, for most Christians, witnessing to the grace of God is at best occasional and incidental rather than deliberate. Repeated studies demonstrate that in war, six hundred support troops support one warrior. Think of that! For every warrior carrying the load imposed by the nation, there are six hundred support troops. What is distressing is discovering that something similar holds true for the people of God. It is not that God designed the congregations to function in a ratio of 600:1; rather, this is what we have adopted as our default condition.

The command of God is that we are each commissioned as warriors in the service of God. There are no rear echelons in service to the Living God. Each believer is appointed to build and to advance the cause of Christ. Just as in the days of Nehemiah, “each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built” [NEHEMIAH 4:18] so believers in this day are appointed to build, always being prepared to provide a sound witness of what God has done in that individual’s life. The Psalmist admonishes all who believe,

“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,  
whom he has redeemed from trouble”

[PSALM 107:2]

This admonition from the pen of David anticipates the command given by Peter, “In your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” [1 PETER 3:15 CSB].

Christians are to be aggressive in telling others of God’s goodness. Jude, the brother of our Lord, instructs believers, “Have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh” [JUDE 22, 23]. Take note of the language cited in these various portions of the Word. God anticipates that His people will speak with boldness as they tell of God’s goodness. The Lord expects that those whom He has saved will be eager to reach lost people. We need to encourage one another to fulfil the commission we received from our Risen Sovereign.

The first truth to draw our attention is Jesus' assertion, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." This authority is not mere power to do; this is the right to do. We excuse abuse of power by saying "Might makes right," but Jesus has both right and might. Moreover, He possessed the right to do all things from the beginning. We are certain that Jesus has authority over the elements of nature and even over the human body. He changed water into wine, multiplied the loaves and fishes and compelled the storm to cease raging. He gave sight to blinded eyes, opened deaf ears and loosened mute tongues. Jesus restored withered hands, gave strength and mobility to paralysed legs and even staunched the flow of blood that made a woman ritually impure. The Son of God raised the dead, not occasionally, but frequently. Without question, Jesus has authority over all the physical creation.

However, Christ's authority extends far beyond mere rule over the physical creation, Jesus has authority over both angels and demons. Peter writes of "Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him" [1 PETER 3:21b, 22]. Later, the brother of our Lord will write, "The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, [Jesus] has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day" [JUDE 6].

It is the Word of the Son of God that holds the demonic powers in check. Recall a dramatic incident that is recorded in each of the synoptic Gospels. "[Jesus and His disciples] came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' For he was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' And Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many.' And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him, saying, 'Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.' So, he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea" [MARK 5:1-13]. It was demonstration of Jesus' authority over the spiritual world. Thus, angels, including the malevolent, fallen creatures we know as demons, are subject to Jesus' authority.

Jesus has authority over the souls of mankind. He calls whom He wills and offers redemption to all who receive Him. Whenever I stand to declare the message of life, I know that some will hear who are appointed to life. In one of His appearances to the Apostle Paul, Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people" [ACTS 18:9, 10].

I know that some become discouraged when results seem small for the effort expended. However, just as the Lord had many people in Ephesus during the days of Paul, so I must believe that the Lord has many people in the cities in which this message is declared to this day. Within the ken of our influence are many people appointed to life. As the message is declared through radio, television and via the Internet, we may be confident that some will hear and believe. Christians are to go in the authority of the Risen Son of God, bearing this message of life. This charge includes you, if you are a follower of the Risen Saviour.

I want to encourage you by speaking of Christ's authority. The Apostle will write, "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" [**ROMANS 8:38, 38**]. It is precisely because of His authority that we need not fear any opposition we may face as we serve Him. Only let us ensure that we serve Him and not our own interests.

Again, Paul speaks of the abolition of every supposed authority that terrifies the world in this day. He reminds us that at the last, Christ "delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" [**1 CORINTHIANS 15:24**].

The authority Jesus possesses is witnessed in Paul's words recorded in the Ephesian Letter. Paul reminds us that God's power "worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come [**EPHESIANS 1:20, 21**].

Listen to the command Jesus delivered, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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" [**MATTHEW 28:19, 20a**]. The command is pointed, precise—make disciples. The manner in which we are to make disciples is through going, through baptising, through teaching. The method of discipling is not a matter of either/or; it is a both/and condition. Christians are to be going, baptising and teaching.

It is assumed that those who follow the Master will go. Perhaps God is directing you to missional work. Perhaps you are being guided by the Spirit of God to go to some distant point where you will witness to the grace and mercy of Christ the Lord. However, it is equally possible that your appointment is to serve nearby through revealing the grace of God to souls who are wounded by the demands of daily life. Throughout our world are women trapped by the expectations of fallen people, forced to sell their bodies or to sacrifice to the gods of pleasure and prosperity the children they carry in their wombs. Surely, such hapless individuals deserve to hear of God's acceptance of them as they are. Other individuals are held fast by chains of despair; they are addicted to alcohol, addicted to drugs, addicted to destructive habits that ruin their lives and crushes hope. Should we not be willing to go to such individuals with the message of life, declaring freedom in Christ the Lord?

I am convinced that each Christian has received appointment to a unique place of service, whether close by or at some distance from where that one now lives. I am certain that God has appointed each Christian to tell their own family of God's mercy, demonstrating the reality of His salvation through a holy life. I know that God has appointed each Christian to tell his or her friends of all that God has done in that believer's life. Earlier, as I spoke of Jesus authority over the demonic powers, I used the example of the man from the Gerasenes who was demonised. When Jesus had freed that man, the man wanted to go with Jesus. However, Jesus commanded that man, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" [**MARK 5:19**].

That is a beautiful verse found in the Psalms which reads,

"Come and hear, all you who fear God,  
and I will tell what he has done for my soul."

[**PSALM 66:16**]

As a Christian, you are entrusted with the precious message of life. Some someone is dying to hear the message you hold in your heart.

Doctor John Broadus was a great scholar who served as the first president of Southern Baptist Seminary. Doctor Broadus tells in one of his writings of the first person he ever pointed to Christ. As I recall the account, Broadus had only been converted when he was encouraged to tell someone of what God had done. He vowed before God that he would speak to the first person he met. To his astonishment, the first person he met was a man who had been born with limited ability to reason and understand. Broadus was tempted to pass the man by, but he recalled his vow before the Lord. Therefore, he spoke to that feeble-minded man, telling him of Jesus and His offer of life. To his amazement, that simple-minded man, perhaps prompted by the simplicity of the message of life, prayed to receive Jesus as Master of life. Ever after, whenever Broadus encountered that man so injured in his mind, the man would say, “Howdy, John; thankee, John” and shake Dr. Broadus’ hand. Broadus’ testimony was that he fully expected that when he walked the streets of glory, one of the first individuals he would meet would be that man, and he would say, “Howdy, John; thankee, John.”

We will tell people of Christ the Lord as we go, but the Commission we have received charges us to baptise them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Those who receive Christ as Lord are to identify with Him as Master. If He is to be King, there should be a coronation. We do not tell God what we will do, rather we obey His command to ensure that the command He has given is fulfilled. Baptism is for those who have received the message of life. On the Day of Pentecost, “Those who received [Peter’s] word were baptised” [ACTS 2:41]. They were not baptised in order to become Christians; but because they had believed and become Christians, they were baptised. Being baptised, they were received into the fellowship of the congregation. We are to go, declaring what God has done for us. When people respond to the message of life, we are to bring them into the fellowship of Christ the Lord.

Those who are received into membership are to be taught. Specifically, those who are being discipled are to be taught “to observe all that [Jesus has] commanded.” I don’t want anyone to slip into the error of thinking that we teach a method or a theological point of view; we are responsible to teach the Word of God.

Almost two decades past, Dr. James Montgomery Boice wrote, “Today’s church needs to recapture the entire counsel of God. To many this seems the most foolish of pursuits. If we were to ask many so-called Christians what should be done in our day to win the world for Christ, it is likely they would talk about literature campaigns, the use of radio and television, the founding of seeker-sensitive churches, recruitment of workers, and how to raise funds. In other words, most of the discussion would center on methods rather than on content. By contrast, Jesus spoke about teaching his commandments. What should our teaching include? Clearly any short list of doctrines is inadequate. We must teach the entire Bible. Nevertheless, faithfulness to the Great Commission must involve”<sup>3</sup> certain truths.

Boice then identifies as essential truth to be taught:

- A high view of Scripture;
- The sovereignty of God, especially in salvation;
- The depravity of man;
- Salvation by grace alone;

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<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery Boice, **The Gospel of Matthew** (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 2001) 649–651

- Work [God assigns us] to do;
- The security of the believer in Christ.

I definitely concur with Dr. Boice's assessment of what must be taught if the churches will prove faithful to the commission Christ has given.

**THE RISEN LORD IS WITH US ALL DAYS** — Jesus said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” [MATTHEW 28:20]. Literally, Jesus said, “I am with you all the days.” Until the consummation of this age, Jesus is always with His people. Wherever the people of God meet, there is Christ in their midst. Wherever His people gather to pray, there is Jesus standing with them. That is easy enough to believe, but I would have you see that He always stands with the humblest saint as that believer fulfils the work that Jesus has assigned.

There are no conditions for us to meet, for the Master is with us. There is no doctrine to hold to, for the Master is with us. It is likely significant that when Jesus is introduced in the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel, He is identified as “Immanuel;” and we are told that this means “God with us” [MATTHEW 1:23]. As Matthew brings this Gospel to a conclusion, he wants us to know that the promise given in the opening verses shall be ever true, for the Lord Jesus Himself will always be with us.

To be certain, Christ the Lord is with us when we worship. Jesus promised that He would be with us when we hold one another accountable within the assembly of the righteous. Jesus promised, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” [MATTHEW 18:20]. As we pray, we are confident that the Risen Saviour is with us, guiding us and pleading for us. However, the text today tells us that Jesus the Son of God is with us when we witness and when we labour to advance His Kingdom.

We go in the authority of the Risen, Reigning Son of God; and as we go, He goes with us. When you open your mouth to tell another of God's goodness, Jesus is guiding your thoughts. When you endeavour to glorify Him through telling of His mercy and of His grace, the Son of God is with you, giving you the words that need to be said. When you comfort those who grieve, speaking of God's kindness, Jesus is with you. When you encourage the faint-hearted, pointing to the Saviour, Jesus is with you. I want you to see if that your witness is powerful, not because of who you are, but because of who has sent you and because you speak with His authority.

When Jesus sent His disciples out on their first evangelistic journey through Judea, He said, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” [MATTHEW 10:16-20]. Take note of that final sentence, claiming it as a promise that is equally applicable to you as you witness of His grace. “It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” God Himself, the Risen Saviour, is speaking through you as you witness.

I have spoken to Christians—Christians have the message of life. There may be some who listen who have never received the gift of life. Perhaps you are a church member, perhaps you have received the rites administered by the churches, and yet, somehow you have never been born from above. I urge you to listen to what I am about to say, for it holds the promise of life.

Jesus, the Son of God presented His life as a sacrifice because of your inability to turn aside the wrath of God. You are a sinner, under condemnation of death. You are unable to do anything to avert the righteous judgement of the Living God. Here is the Good News—Jesus, the perfect Son of God, took the punishment you deserve so that you need not suffer divine judgement. However, His sacrifice is meaningless for you until you receive it. When you receive Him as Master over your life, you receive the gift of life which He offers. He assured us that this is real life by rising from the dead. Jesus not only died, but He rose again.

Now, the Word of God calls all who will do so to “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” [ACTS 16:31]. The Word of God assures us, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation” [ROMANS 10:9, 10 CSB]. We are promised, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:13]. For someone who listens today, this message is for you. Believe Christ and be saved. Amen.