

Matthew 28:18-20 is referred to as the Great Commission. This was given likely to the 500 assembled referred to in 1 Cor. 15:6. The main verb is "make" disciples. The local church is how the Gospel is spread. The command to baptize is public identification with Christ. The command of preaching/teaching is towards obedience as the slave of God.

**What were the seeds the makes the Great Commission make sense?**

1. **Example of the Master:** V35, is both a summary of His current ministry but also an example of the work that will be done. Jesus is the sole preacher (John is in jail) at the time preaching the Kingdom: 1) Going to all the cities. 2) Teaching: giving instruction. 3) Preaching: Jesus is proclaiming and heralding the coming Kingdom and calling those listening to obedience. 4) Forthtelling: "The kingdom is at hand," and demonstrating kingdom life with Christ as King.
2. **Compassion of the Savior:** V36, "felt compassion," Jesus had pity in His guts, a genuine concern for the lost that they will be judged and be sent to the Lake of Fire. Unbelievers need to know theological darkness. They are dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1) and are sinners who will be rejected by God if they are not clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
3. **Distress of the People:** V36, "distress and downcast," they were troubled and bothered. They were under the religious thumb of the leaders and pharisees. "Downcast" thrown down, pinned, helpless. Eph. 2:1, "dead in transgression and sins," there are no legitimate shepherds to lead the people.
4. **Shepherding of the Sheep:** V36, "as sheep without a shepherd," Ezek. 34:1-4, rebellious shepherds who are abusing and hurting the sheep. V5-10, the Lord decommissions the shepherds over Israel, removing them. V11-16, the Lord will shepherd them. Jesus is the great shepherd and passes eternal judgement on the leaders of Israel (John 8:21).
5. **Vastness of the Work:** V37, "the harvest is plentiful." There is a day when judgement comes, Heb. 9:27. In Philippians 4:1-3, Paul speaks to Euodia and Syntyche to consider the Gospel work. 1) Paul reminds them that they worked along him for the Gospel, V3. 2) Reminds them that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, V3. 3) Reminds them to focus on others, to give effort, serve, labor (4:5), and pray (4:6). We do the work of ministry in the strength God supplies for the glory of God, 1 Pet. 4:11
6. **The Challenge of the Faithful:** V37, "workers are few." At the time, Jesus and John the Baptist were the only ones proclaiming the Kingdom of God. There are never enough harvesters and if there are more harvesters, the Gospel will be proclaimed even more.
7. **The Source of the Salvation:** V38, "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest." It is encouraging to know that God calls those to salvation, 1 Pet. 5:10, Rom. 8:28, Eph. 1:5, 1 Pet. 1:3, John 17:2. It is sobering that harvesting and judgement are shown together in Scripture, Is. 17:10-13 (a heap), Rev. 14:14-20 (earth is ripe), Joel 3:11-13 (ripe harvest), Matt. 13:30, 40-42 (Wheat and Tares).
  - a. 2 Cor. 5:11, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men to repent because men will stand before the Lord for judgement.
8. **The Manifestation of the Salvation:** V38, pray for workers. The apostles called to be fishers of men, Mark 1:17. Pray for harvesters and those who will support those who are.
  - a. Acts 17:6, the apostles turned the world upside down.

### **Further Discussion and Application**

With so few harvesters and such a large harvest, what part do disciples of Jesus have to contribute to the work of the Gospel? What is our motivation to bring glory to God? Why does it work out that those who are asked to serve and give are asked to serve and give even more? What is much required of a disciple of Christ? How much is required to be given? How much do we owe? What more can we do to help in the work of proclaiming and laboring for the King?

Paul commands us to excel more and more in our love for others and towards Christ. What are we currently doing in ministry? What could we remove from our calendar so we could add another opportunity to serve the Lord that would help accomplish the discipling of other believers?

Spend some time thinking about the compassion you have for others and comparing our heart to the example Jesus gave to us. How does John describe someone who loves the Lord in 1 John 4:7-12. Why is loving others a hallmark of those who love God? How can we love others fervently? How can we grow in this grace?

There is a great day coming when the harvest is brought in. That day will bring sorrow and pain to many and joy and peace for believers. How does Scripture say that we should run this race? How much should we give? How much of ourselves should we offer? How many more relationships could we have in our lives that help the kingdom of God grow? What will be the richness of our time here on earth? People, things, or experiences? How do we make people the priority of our lives?