

# SERMON GUIDE

## Ecclesia: The Mission and Unity of the Church

### Matthew 28:18-20



Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!

The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!

#### SERMON NOTES

Those who work in the medical profession have a term they use called medical triage. Medical triage is a system of prioritizing the medical needs of patients. Doctors or nurses will assess their patients' needs, categorize their needs (immediate, delayed, minor), then allocate resources based on the gravity of the need. That doesn't mean that minor injuries are meaningless, but it does mean that someone who fell off of a ladder and broke his arm with no other injuries is of a less priority than someone who's actively having a seizure. We do something similar in ordering our doctrine.

I want to introduce a term to you today: Theological Triage. If you've been around TJC for a while, you've likely heard of this before. If you're newer to our church this may be the first time you've heard it. In 2005, Dr. Albert Mohler, who is the president of the most prestigious seminary in the world (I don't just say that because he's going to be here in two weeks, I say that because that's where I'm getting my degree), wrote an article titled "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity." This article was foundational for a lot of evangelicals who were trying to think through the mission and unity of the church.

**1<sup>st</sup> Tier:** Defines who we are in gospel fellowship with. These are the doctrines that if we don't align then we can't fellowship together in any real sense.

- *The Creeds:* Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed
- *Essential truths:* The Gospel (justification by faith), The Trinity, inerrancy

**2<sup>nd</sup> Tier:** Defines the doctrinal distinctives of local churches. These are the doctrines that don't necessarily mean you are not a Christian, but they do affect our ability to fellowship together in the same local church.

- *More critical:* Women pastors, abortion, marriage
- *Less critical:* Baptism, use of spiritual gifts in a service (girl waving a flag while Erik is preaching)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Tier:** Defines doctrinal distinctives of individuals. These are the doctrines that we can have friendly disagreement over. They can be discussed and debated, but they should not cause someone to leave a local church.

- Millennium view, election, matters of Christian liberty

This is a brief overview. I will dive into this topic even more with pastor Erik and pastor Brett on this week's episode of the Weekend Recap. Now, I want to turn our attention to the mission of the church in Matthew 28.

### **Exposition**

**V18 -- *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."***

The authority of Christ is the foundation of the church's mission. This is what Jesus bookends the passage with. V18 – "all authority has been given to me" and V20 – "I am with you always"

Note that he says this authority was given to him. What does that mean? It means that the Son's authority that he has here on the earth was given to him by the Father.

Because the Father sent the Son, the Son came to accomplish the will of the Father. In order to do that, the Father granted authority over the earth to the Son. You see this throughout all of Jesus' ministry in the gospels. He healed sicknesses, cast out demons, raised dead people back to life, and even forgave sins. How did he do this? With the authority that had been granted to him by the Father. This doesn't mean that the Son is any less God than the Father, but it does mean that the Father and Son have unique roles as Father and Son that play out in the work of God.

This authority that the Son has is not something that he only possessed during his earthly ministry. The Son is granted authority to rule over the world right now so that he can then turn around and hand over a renewed creation to his Father. He is currently holding all things together by the word of his power. We will discuss this more later on. For now, let's move forward and look at what the church is expected to do under the authority of Christ.

**V19-20 – “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, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

With the authority of Christ backing us, the church then goes forward into all the nations to make disciples. Jesus had first commanded his disciples to go into Israel and preach there first.

The gospel came first to the Jew (Rom. 1:16). Since Israel rejected their Messiah, the gospel, as the instrument of the new covenant, now goes forth into all the nations, not just Israel.

This new covenant with a new message is accompanied with a new sign: baptism. As the church goes into all nations making disciples, they must baptize them to show that they are disciples.

We baptize in the full name of the Lord, which is why you hear us say in our baptisms “We now baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Each person of the Trinity had a role in bringing this person to faith, so they are baptized in the name of every person of the Trinity. The Father ordained your salvation, the Son accomplished your salvation, and the Spirit applied your salvation. You are baptized in the full name of the Godhead because you were saved by the full work of the Godhead.

The people of the nations are who we are making disciples, not the nations themselves. This is something that some Christian leaders get wrong. The church’s job is to make disciples of the people within the nation, not the nation as an entity. We want nations, especially our own, to bow the knee to Christ through legislating just laws, but the church’s jurisdiction is over individuals and families, not unbelieving civilians.

Now, one of the biggest mistakes that Christians/Churches often make is stopping there and not reading the rest of the sentence. We always emphasize that the Great Commission calls us to baptize disciples of all the nations, but we then treat baptism like it’s this bigger step when I “really become a Christian” – then once you’re baptized, now we’ve met an accomplishment, and we can coast for a while. But the way that it’s designed to work is that baptism is the very first thing you do when you come to faith so that you’re actually saying to the world “I believe in Christ.”

That's a mistake that a lot of new Christians make. A mistake that more mature Christians, and even church leaders make is treating verse 19 and verse 20 like they are separate responsibilities. You cannot divorce V19 from V20. The mission of the church is not to baptize people. The mission of the church is to baptize disciples, and you cannot make a disciple if you do not teach them. It is an error to separate the role of teaching from the mission of the church. This is why the sermon takes up the majority of our time in worship, because we are teaching. I'm going to get more into this in a few minutes.

This is the mission of the church: to make mature disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them.

### **There is a universal and local mission.**

- Just like elders function universally and individually, so do churches. The elders as a collective function to govern the church. An elder as an individual teaches the church, but this individual function is not divorced from the collective function.
- The mission of the universal church is to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey Christ. The universal mission is aimed at all nations.
- The mission of a local church is to make disciples in the nation God has put them. The local mission is aimed at the people of the nation where they reside. (This does not mean local churches ignore global missions)

### **There is a general and specific mission.**

- Specifically, the mission of the church is to baptize and teach disciples. The specific mission functions under the priestly role of Christ. The church holds a prophetic/priestly role in calling sinners to repentance.
- Generally, the mission of the church is to be baptized disciples who are being taught. The general mission functions under the kingship of Christ. The church holds a kingly role in governing ourselves as a king governs a nation.

This mission continues throughout the entire church age until it is ultimately fulfilled in Christ returning to his Bride, which has been fully gathered.

## **Unity**

## **1. Healthy division is a good thing.**

A local church must have a doctrinal identity.

## **2. Unite where you can agree.**

Our goal should be to unite as much as possible with our brothers and sisters, not try to figure out how many issues divide us. So, we must have a framework that helps us understand the gravity of doctrinal division and to what extent it unites or divides. This is where our theological triage applies.

Examples:

- We could work with Roman Catholics on a ministry related to abortion, but we could not work with them on anything related to the gospel because we do not agree on the gospel. Since this is a 1<sup>st</sup> order issue, it significantly limits our unity.
- We could work with an egalitarian church in a disaster relief project, but we could not worship together in a local church because we don't agree on who has the authority to lead in the church.
- We could work with Pentecostals in an evangelism effort because we agree on the gospel, but we could not be members of the same church because we don't agree on the use of the sign gifts in a worship service.

## **Mission**

### **3. The Great Commission is not divorced from the Dominion Mandate.**

We have this misconception that the culture mandate in Genesis 2 is just the way that God designed everything before the Fall and it would be nice if everything worked that way, but now we live in the shadow of the Fall so we just have to do the best that we can. The reality is that the church's mandate is the restoration of the culture mandate.

This is specifically tied to Matt. 28:20. If you are going to teach disciples to obey all that Christ has commanded, you can't ignore God's design for man. One mistake that churches/leaders often make in discipleship is we equate "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" with getting coffee and reading a theology book. Now, that's a great thing and I'm not telling you to stop doing that. But I

am saying that the teaching component of the Great Commission is a lot more than just theology. Remember what Pastor Erik said last week: Orthodoxy (right belief) leads to orthopraxy (right living) which leads to doxology (right worship).

It is essential that we get our belief right (orthodoxy), but if we stop then we're not actually fulfilling the Great Commission. Teaching disciples to obey all that Christ has commanded is not just teaching them about the Trinity and justification by faith. It's about teaching them what to believe and what to do, so that they know how to worship with both their mouth and their life.

You see this all over the New Testament. When Paul talks about false doctrine, it is always linked to false living. (Galatia is the prime example)

So, if we are teaching people to obey Christ and that means more than just teaching them right theology, then what are we supposed to teach them? We teach them to obey the culture mandate. Failing to do this is giving into the Gnosticism that you've heard Erik talk about so many times. It's not helpful for someone to have a great understanding of the spiritual things like the hypostatic union if we're afraid to teach them about the physical things like work, money, and politics. (Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday) I am not going to exhaust this idea here, because after Easter we're going to do an entire sermon series on this.

Instead, I want you to see how this links together. God gave the culture mandate in Genesis 2. Man fell in Genesis 3. Christ accomplished the work that restores the culture mandate. Christ then gives the gospel to the church which he uses to restore his people. The church expands the Kingdom of God through our mission, which ends with the return of Christ and the final restoration of man in the garden as he was intended to be.

As the gospel goes forth to the nations and continues to take dominion over the earth and the people of the earth, we are restoring man back to fellowship with God. The Great Commission will end in the ultimate restoration of man's fellowship with God. The Great Commission is not the end goal, rather it is the tool God uses to accomplish the end goal.

#### **4. The mission of the Church is triumphant.**

**1 Corinthians 15:22-28 – <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.**

This is the glorious future of the Christian faith, and the completion of the mission of the church.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**

- Read Matthew 28:18-20 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
  - Matthew 10:5-6
  - John 5:19
  - John 6:39
  - Romans 12:18
  - Revelation 7:9-10
  - Revelation 21:3-4
- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
  - What did this teach you about God?
  - What did this teach you about man?
  - What did this teach you about salvation?

- **DISCUSS**

- What is theological triage, and why is it important for the church?
- What are some examples of first-tier doctrines, and why are they non-negotiable?
- How does Jesus' authority in Matthew 28:18-20 shape the mission of the church?
- What is the relationship between baptism and discipleship in the Great Commission?
- How does the sermon emphasize the connection between doctrine and Christian living?
- What role does the local church play in fulfilling the Great Commission?
- How does theological triage impact Christian unity?
- What is the connection between the Great Commission and the Dominion Mandate?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

- **MEMORIZE**

- **Proverbs 1:7 – *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge***





- **BUILD UP:** How will you be built up this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
  - **Life Groups** are a time and place to connect and learn to better follow Jesus together while abiding in Him. Life Groups are the primary means of disciple-making at TJC. Our groups focus on connecting, learning, following, and abiding. Groups meet weekly on various days/times across Wilson County. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student discipled into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** How do you plan to be sent out to engage the world around you? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
  - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who

are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our staff:** Morgan Cates (Discipleship Director)
- **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
  - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
  - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
  - Southeast Asia Team departing on May 25, 2025
  - Kenya Summer Trip departing on May 25, 2025
- **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>