

Sermon File # 785

Scripture Text: Matthew 28:16-20

Sermon Title: *The Great Commission*

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At International Baptist Church of Brussels, Belgium

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

Sources cited in this manuscript are listed at the end.

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The Great Commission

Introduction:

Open your Bibles with me to Matthew 28:16-20. Last Sunday and today we're looking at the two passages of Scripture that form our church's vision and mission statement. Last Sunday we looked at the Great Commandment of Jesus, that we love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves. Today we consider Jesus' Great Commission of the church.

This passage contains what is no doubt the best known of the three Great Commission passages in the New Testament. The others are John 20:21 and Acts 1:8. Here in Matthew's gospel, the setting is on a mountain or hilltop, which is a frequent setting in Matthew for close encounters with Christ and dramatic revelations of his glory. Included among the worshipers on the mountaintop are the eleven disciples (minus Judas). Most commentators say the eleven were probably joined by other followers of Jesus, perhaps the "more than 500" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:6.

Follow as I read **Matthew 28:16-20**.

Our vision at IBC is: *To see God glorified through the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.*

Our mission is: *To encourage and equip the church to glorify God, through His Son Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The means to fulfilling this mission is through our obeying a) the Great Commandment to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, soul and minds, and to love our neighbors as ourselves and b) the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to make disciples at home and around the world.*

One New Testament scholar has written that “The five short verses that comprise this Great Commission passage are among the most important to establish the ongoing agenda of the church throughout the ages” (Wilkins, 947). So, as the Great Commandment defines our nature and character as a church, the Great Commission defines Jesus’ agenda for our mission.

I think it is important that pastor, elders and people share a common vision, and to me a vision is to be none other than that which Jesus himself has for his church, which is to be found in Scripture. As your pastor/elder, I envision for IBC the greatness Jesus desires and has designed for his church. There are a lot of models today for the church, and concepts based on what has proven to be successful in other places. Regardless of these, I think we do well to base our vision of and aspirations for the church on what Jesus says the church should be and do and that we follow his agenda for the church.

Jesus gave two directives for the church that comprise his vision that should become our vision for being a faithful people. He gave, first of all, the Great Commandment. This is the summary commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Matthew 22:34-40). As we obey this in the power of our new life in Christ, we will be that loving fellowship that glorifies God. The Great Commandment addresses the motivation for the church.

The other directive is the Great Commission, which contains our agenda, mandate and directive as a people called to continue the work Jesus began (Acts 1:1). I pray that you will share, along with the elders, this vision for the church, which is Jesus’ vision and agenda for our church. The church will then become great as Jesus measures greatness because we will be faithful to his agenda for us.

In these words of Jesus we call the Great Commission one of the key words is the modifier “all.” “Strikingly,” as one scholar notes, four times this word is used and it serves as the structure for our thoughts this morning (Turner, 687).

Let’s note first this morning that the Great Commission...

Is given with *all authority*

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority (*exousia*, power/authority) in heaven and earth has been given to me” (verse 18).

Jesus had finished the work on earth he had come to do. He provided for the salvation of sinners through his suffering and death on the cross. He was now risen and preparing to ascend to heaven as exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus' announcement that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given him was "an astounding claim" (Robertson, 244). Jesus was also setting the stage for that Day when he will return, when before him every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

But his work of Kingdom expansion on earth wasn't over. With his authority as exalted, risen Lord and Savior, he announces his lordship over his followers. He gives his marching orders, and his authority is, first...

Over worshipers

Of this crowd of perhaps 500 or more (1Corinthians 15:6), many, perhaps most, worshiped him. They recognized his worth and worshiped in adoring humility. The word for worship here is the word that means to prostrate oneself before the object of worship (*prosekunesan*, Arndt & Gingrich, 724).

The Great Commission is given to worshipers, those who recognize that Jesus Christ is worthy of adoration and obedience. It was in his experience of worshiping holy God in his temple that Isaiah received his commission to go with the Lord's message to the people (Isaiah 6:1-13).

We are never called into or prepared for service to the Lord until we have met him and learned to worship him. Worship is what centers our hearts on Christ and makes him central in our lives. There we are reminded of our sin and emptiness and of Christ's holiness and absolute power to bless and strengthen us in his service. Worship is that act by which we recognize and submit to Christ's authority over us.

In personal and corporate worship, which are both essential for the believer, we confront the holiness and authority of Jesus Christ and our sinfulness. Then, we receive his forgiveness and submit anew to his authority over every aspect of our lives.

In our media-saturated culture it's hard even for Christians to not think of worship as an entertainment or information event, like a concert or an extended "info-mercial." That's why so many people get out of sorts if the musical styles are not to their liking, or the sermon isn't an entertaining, inspirational, motivational and therapeutic experience that leaves one feeling good about oneself.

Worship is in fact an encounter with a holy God who reminds us anew of his authority and redirects our wayward lives back into his will and way. Worship calls us back to God's absolute supremacy. When we worship the crucified, risen, glorified Lord Jesus, we acknowledge his authority over all. That recognition enables us to trust that Jesus is sovereign over the entire universe and is sovereign over anything that could ever impact our lives, whether good or bad circumstances. Jesus' claim to have all authority in heaven and earth is what enables us to understand verses like Romans 8:28.

In worship we are reminded of our total indebtedness to grace. Our hearts are once again stirred with grateful love. Worship calls us back to obey the Great Commandment and prepares us to receive the Great Commission.

But our text tells us that Jesus came to announce his authority not only over worshipers but also...

Over doubters

The crowd that met Jesus in that time of worship and receiving the Great Commission included doubters. We don't know why they doubted. Even the great sign of Jesus' bodily resurrection didn't eliminate doubt, which shows that faith is a work of grace and is not of sight and human reasoning. Perhaps, as some have suggested, many were understandably confused about how to respond to and behave in the presence of a supernaturally manifested, exalted, and holy being. Some of the disciples worshiped almost instinctively. Others were less sure how to react (Blomberg, 430).

This word in verse 17 for doubt (*distazo*) refers more to hesitation than to settled unbelief. It was perhaps a temporary suspension when they had a mind to believe and one to disbelieve. They were "in two minds" (Guinness, 23f).

Jesus comes this morning to give his Great Commission to those who are doubters. You haven't yet settled on Jesus but you are open and ready to listen and willing to receive the truth. Jesus will make himself real to you if you have an open heart and mind. The fact that they came to the mountain to see and hear Jesus is encouraging that they too became worshipers. Perhaps God had already begun a work of grace in their hearts that he would bring to completion (Philippians 1:6).

You here this morning may have not settled on faith in Jesus, but the fact that you are here is evidence he is working in your heart to make himself known to you. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, the Father is seeking worshipers to glorify him around the throne of heaven for eternity (John 4:23). In fact, relating to the doubters here this morning is an important objective of the Great Commission. Our first objective is to reach out to you, that you might become worshipers of Jesus along with us. Pastor John Piper says that mission exists because worship doesn't (*LNBG*) No doubt some of these doubters became worshipers as God gave them grace to move beyond their doubts.

Piper also reminds us that when Jesus says all authority is given to him, that means he has sovereign authority over governments, all businesses (important to note during this economic crisis), stock market indicators, over science, diseases, the weather, and natural and personal disasters (2, *DS* website). When we worship Jesus we renew our faith and trust in God's sovereignty and authority and submit to him our anxieties, doubts and fears. We realize that, even though we don't understand God's ways in this sin-darkened world, we can trust he is sovereign and has all authority.

And when we become worshipers we are under the lordship of the Supreme Authority in heaven and earth. We are called into the service of one who is sovereign over all other power and authority. We are called by the one who can enable us to do anything he would command us to do. Jesus was given authority by the Father because he finished the work of the cross and the atonement. Now he calls us with that authority to continue his work of redemption by doing our mission in the Great Commission (Colossians 1:24). And, when we do his work, we are simply participating in the eternally foreordained purposes of Sovereign God.

150 years ago CH Spurgeon preached on the Great Commission and reminded his congregation of the absolute authority of Christ over the nations:

“This is the church’s *right*. All power is given to Christ in heaven and in earth.” Spurgeon then addressed kings and rulers of nations that forbid the gospel, which seems as relevant in our day as it most certainly was in the mid-nineteenth century.

“Do you pass decrees forbidding the gospel to be preached? We laugh at you! (You) have no power to prevent it, for all power is given unto Christ in heaven and in earth. Do you say the missionary has no right upon your shore? (The church) has right anywhere and everywhere; she has rights in heaven without limit, and rights in earth without bound; for all power is given to her head in heaven and in earth, and she therefore has a patent, a claim which is not to be disputed, to take to herself all countries and all kingdoms, because the power above is given unto Christ” (285-286)

Here is the authority and power of Christ at work in the Great Commission, and you and I are given his authority and power as we join in his great work. He has power to turn your unbelieving spouse or neighbor or classmate into a worshiper. Where God wills to take his gospel, no one has power to withstand.

We appropriate that power into our lives through prayer. Another of the Great Commission passages is John 20:19-23, when Jesus appears to his disciples on the night of his resurrection. Jesus breathed on them and gave a foretaste of the Holy Spirit who would fill them on the Day of Pentecost. And Jesus commanded his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they would be “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). By prayer as God’s church we are filled with power to enable us to participate in his kingdom work. When the apostles in Jerusalem were beaten and intimidated by their enemies, the church gathered to pray down God’s power to strengthen them and give them new boldness (Acts 5:23-31). Prayer is the church’s declaration of dependence on God’s authority and is our plea for his grace and blessing to allow us to participate with him.

I’m grateful that prayer is becoming a higher priority in the life of IBC, Brussels. This includes not only individuals growing in prayer, but the church itself giving greater priority to beseeching the God of all authority and power. Because Christ has been given all authority, we should pray for the persecuted church to have boldness to stand firm in his authority.

The next “all” in the Great Commission is that it...

Is to include *all nations*

We are to go into all nations (19). Because in the Greek the word for “go” is a participle, some interpreters and preachers make it sound as if the Great Commission is a casual, matter of fact ordeal. They like to paraphrase these words, “As you are going,” or, “Since you’re going anyway.” But the best scholarship says there is a strong force in this participle, “going” (McKnight, 1641). Our going, in other words, is to be intentional, as an act of obedience. Even as we go forth in our mundane routines of life there is to be a sense of purpose, knowing God is in control even of our normal “traffic patterns” and our casual conversations and serendipitous encounters.

We are to sit at the feet of the one who has all authority, and are to worship him. But we don’t remain in the gathering for worship. G. Campbell Morgan says that to remain at the feet of Jesus is to miss the meaning of the resurrection. Worship is to send us forth from the mountaintop to the valley of human need as missional Christians, not just as supporters of missionaries. As we note in the passages about the Transfiguration (Mark 9, etc.), we are to worship on the mountain, but take the mountain into the valley (as did the disciples and Jesus in ministry to the demon-possessed boy following the Transfiguration).

We are to go into our spheres of influence with the “mountain” in our hearts. Without the “mountain” of personal and corporate worship we are ill prepared for the valley of ministry to human need and for the engagements of spiritual warfare.

From Jesus’ Great Commission we see that we are to go to all nations, first...

At home

The word for nations is “ethne,” and means “peoples, cultures, or nations.” Every one of us has an “ethne” where God has placed us. It is an identifiable group of people who have something in common with you. Obviously, you share the same language, but also you share common interests. Included in your “nation” are members of your family. These are the priority in your mission field, your own nuclear family.

Parents, God will hold you accountable first for your children whom God has entrusted to you. You, not the church, are to evangelize and then disciple them. Don’t get so involved in church activity that you overlook your own family and fail to win and nurture them. This is the tragedy and disobedience of many pastors’ lives and responsibility toward our own family members.

At the lunch table with the young men I met with regularly in our most recent pastorate, it was gratifying to hear one say he was going to have to back off some of his church activity in order to plan to be with his family for some evening meals at home (In fact, this young man had become overly involved in church responsibilities that could have been delegated to others). This is a vital part of his doing the Great Commission to his most important “nation/ethne.”

God has given you other “ethne” in what has been called your “concentric circles of concern” (Thompson). God has placed you in your school, your work place, neighborhood and places of recreation. Here are people with whom you have regular contact. God is sovereign, and he has ordained that these people be in your life. No one else can relate to them like you can. You have the privilege and responsibility to join with God as he does his work of drawing them to himself.

We are to go also to all nations...

Around the world

One of the reasons it is impossible to be an obedient Christian outside of fellowship and involvement with a local church is that the church is given the assignment to carry out its mission in the Great Commission. Another Great Commission passage, Acts 1:8, delineates the outreach of the church’s mission. The church also has its “concentric circles of concern.” Before his Ascension, Jesus told his disciples they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit and be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

At IBC you and I have an assignment to go to our "Jerusalem" right here in Brussels. Of course this begins first with your own families who have those who need Christ. You must begin there, reaching the unsaved in your larger church family and those in our various concentric circles of concern. In a significant way, God in his sovereignty has brought a lot of the world to IBC, with the many nationalities in our congregation and the host of nations represented in Brussels in places of government, business and studies.

It’s good to have fellowship with one another, such as we enjoyed in last night’s dinner. But we need to consider more events to draw the un-churched onto our property to express “neighborliness” and acceptance to those outside our fellowship, creating opportunities for unbelievers to mingle with believers, with a prayer that God will use these gestures of hospitality to give them an awareness that might lead to future contacts with and ministry to them.

We also have others whom God has drawn to our church through attending worship or perhaps a ministry like the English language classes, or the youth and Ladies’ ministries, including Bible studies, and the ministry for young mothers called MOPS, or "Mothers of Preschoolers." They may already be attending Sunday School, women's ministries or maybe one of our home groups. In that case, the believing members are responsible to teach and reach them for the gospel.

I am convinced that even in the US effective evangelism and certainly disciple-making are going to have to be done through one-on-one relationships. And in what has been for a long time called post-Christian Europe, relationships are perhaps the only way of reaching the unconverted and unchurched. Home and Alpha groups seem to be a way to connect with outsiders and an effective way to introduce them to relationships that could eventually connect them to the church and gain a hearing for the gospel. Some of you are involved with outreach ministries in your sphere of influence, such as in the workplace. This is being missional, taking the gospel to our "Jerusalem."

Certainly the "Judea" of IBC is a great, un-reached mission field. We are already involved in supporting a good number of missionaries who have ministries here in Belgium and this proximate part of Western Europe. IBC is indeed a flagship church in this part of the world, strategically located to reach the large part of the world that is coming to us in the Capital of Europe. The significant number of Muslims living in Belgium represents people under deep spiritual darkness. I heard a Muslim convert to Christ share his testimony which expressed the essential difference between Islam and the gospel of Christ. "In Islam," said this young man, "Allah demanded we give our sons to him." In the gospel of Christ, God gave his Son for us."

A missionary friend in French-speaking Canada sent me a video about how that the present culture of Europe, which is nominally Christian, cannot sustain itself because of the low birth rate. The far higher birth rate in Europe is among Muslim immigrants and also the number of Islamic immigrants is on the rise. Islamic leaders who desire world domination say that a war of conquest to take over the governments of Europe will not be necessary. In a matter of a few decades they will possibly be the new Islamic majority and will simply vote themselves into power. As Christians, we must see this not as a threat but as an opportunity, and an urgent one, which is why our support of the ministry of one of our Brussels missionaries, Ishak Ghatas, pastor of the Arabic Church, is so vitally important. These Muslims are in need of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and an experience with a loving, gracious and merciful God.

We also are part of the work of the Great Commission to the nations to the ends of the earth. We support missionaries directly who are serving on different continents. As we give, pray, send volunteer teams to prayer walk and to minister to our missionaries, and even send our children and families to the mission field, we are going to the ends of the earth. Only through the church and kingdom enterprises can we as individuals be involved in doing the Great Commission. The Great Commission is to include all nations. As we seek to reach our own local *ethne*, we must not neglect reaching out to the ends of the earth. Every day there are people, for example, Afghani refugees fleeing across their borders, who have not have an opportunity to hear the Good News about Jesus. Even though mission agencies are targeting the un-reached, there are still over a thousand unreached people groups in the world, representing many of the 1.7 billion people in what is called "The Last Frontier." Through our support of missions we are given the opportunity to be a fully Great Commission Christian in a Great Commission church.

The next "all" is that the Great Commission...

Is to involve teaching *all things*

Jesus commands us, "Therefore, go and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything (lit, *all things*) I have commanded you" (20).

The task of the church is to make disciples of all nations, and this we do by teaching to obey all things he has commanded us. The entire Moral Law is summarized in the

Great Commandment to love God entirely and love our neighbor unreservedly (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31). Jesus teaches a surpassing righteousness in his Sermon on the Mount with his interpretation of the Old Covenant law. One scholar notes that the Gospel of Matthew became a handbook on discipleship in the early church for the succeeding generation of disciples of Jesus (Turner, 958).

With all authority we are to go to all nations and teach all disciples that God gives us. We are to teach them to obey the command to love God and all people. The first movement is that we teach others to obey the Lord Jesus by first of all...

Incorporating into the Body

A disciple is one who is enlisted to be like his discipler. He is a learner enlisted to be like his teacher. Jesus said, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). The Great Commission is based on the assumption we are becoming more like Jesus and thus commands that we reproduce ourselves in the lives of others.

Horrible negative examples of disciples are those being made by terrorist organizations, literally throughout the world. They are following and becoming like their teachers, bent on creating terror in order to disrupt social and government stability and carry out their agendas of hatred.

The *Great Commission* mandates us to go and make disciples who will become like us in the way we are like the Master Teacher, Jesus. And, the first step is to incorporate them into the Body of Christ, the local church. This is to be done with authentic relationship evangelism. Too long our churches have practiced decision-based evangelism. We have used sales pitches to get people to assent to a plan of salvation that offers heaven without a cross, that Jesus says we must take up to follow him. We are to call the lost to a relationship of obedience to Jesus as Lord. Baptism is the ordinance Jesus has given us to identify with him and with his community (Wilkins, 954).

I remember talking with a missionary, Tim, who was strategy coordinator for the Nilotic people groups of Eastern Africa. I was riding with him in his 4-wheel drive truck into some remote areas of Kenya, as we discussed a recent nationwide evangelistic campaign during which thousands of Kenyans recorded decisions for Christ. But Tim said he wasn't getting too excited about those numbers until he began to see them baptized into a local church and begin to grow in their obedience to God's Word. He said many Kenyans, like nationals in many other countries, are eager to make decisions that please Americans.

I thought about all in American churches too eager to please parents or even well meaning evangelists, pastors and lay witnesses. They accepted an offer and made a decision, but were not converted by the drawing and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to follow Jesus in a growing relationship.

The *Great Commission* directs us to reach out with God's Spirit and bring the unconverted into a relationship with Christ and his Body, the church. Then there is, in authentic disciple-making...

Instructing in the Word

The *Great Commission* says we are to make obedient disciples. This is what Jesus meant by the work of the Father as being the work of making worshipers, those who honor and glorify God with their lives, and who will continue to worship throughout eternity (John 4:23). Our evangelism must be holistic. We are commanded to evangelize and disciple people toward spiritual maturity. We are commanded not just to spew out information but to oversee the transformation of the character of those we reach with the gospel (Turner, 690).

This means we stay with the new convert. The home and Alpha group becomes a means of outreach but also inreach, as we continue to nurture the new convert. Also, small accountability groups that meet for prayer, study, and encouragement can be a vital source of keeping people on a growth track. Our Sunday School ministry can also be an important aspect of disciple-making. Teaching obedience never stops till we get to heaven. And, we seek to help the new convert grow until he/she becomes a disciple-maker. Then we can grow by multiplication.

The Great Commission is to involve the teaching of all things, and finally, the work of the Great Commission...

Is done with him who is with us *always*

Jesus promises, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (20). As one commentator says, "Emmanuel, 'God with us' (1:23) in humiliation, is now glorified and with His disciples until *the close of the age*...He has accomplished His work in His incarnation. He gives us His presence so that we may accomplish ours" (Nixon, 850). Notice that the Great Commission is done with him who graciously gives us...

His presence

This last sentence of our text is a great fact and promise: the Lord Jesus is with us always, lit. "all the days" (Nolland, 1271). "To the very end of the age" could actually be simply the equivalent of "forever" (Blomberg, 433). In any case, Jesus is present through the Holy Spirit until our mission is completed and we are with him forever in heaven. In John 13-17 Jesus explains his presence with his followers through the Paraclete/Helper, who will be in us to enable us to continue his mission (Acts 1:1).

Jesus, on the mountain giving his Great Commission, is passing the torch to his disciples (Blomberg). He promises the Holy Spirit, who came upon them in full measure and permanently on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Now, he comes into every true believer at the decisive moment of commitment and rebirth by the Holy Spirit. The converted are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, even when we grieve him by our momentary disobedience (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 4:30).

Even though we are Spirit indwelt, we as God's people are always in jeopardy of doing his work without the full measure of his presence. We are always in danger of

doing kingdom/church work in our strength and apart from the fullness of his presence. And, without his Spirit's fullness and blessing, we will lack joy, and will be unproductive and will find ourselves at cross-purposes with holy God. In the name of God, we can actually find ourselves against God. Jesus says, "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26). Note, Jesus didn't say where are there he will be to help us do what we decide needs to be done. Kingdom work is God's work, and our part and privilege is simply to join Sovereign God.

I recall something I read, perhaps by evangelical Anglican writer and pastor, the late John RW Stott, in a discussion of the church's dependence on the Holy Spirit. He said that every church needs to ask what might happen if the Holy Spirit were not hypothetically but actually withdrawn from its fellowship, worship and ministries. What actual difference would the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit make on the way we relate, worship and act? Obviously, if his withdrawal were to make no difference, then we need to repent of just going through the motions and not joining God in his work, which requires the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. God's work is kingdom work and requires his supernatural wisdom, love and power.

The most important asset we have is the presence of God. Without him, Jesus said, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Prayer is not our offering God our "grocery list," nor is it overcoming God's reluctance to join in our pre-determined endeavors. Prayer is the language of dependence on God, and the expression of our heartfelt need for him. In prayer fellowship with God we discover his heart and the assignment he has for us. Prayer is heart language by which we commune with God and participate worshipfully in his kingdom work. Prayer is the practice of the presence of God who invites us to join him. And as never before I need to practice the presence of God in my life. The reason I often lack joy and peace and also the power and boldness to effectively witness and to preach and serve as I should is my neglect of God's greatest gift—his indwelling presence and our fellowship with him.

We must be certain and aware of his presence, and claim as never before...

His promise

A church with a sense of a desperate need for God is a church that is in a position of being blessed. When a church no longer thinks it needs God, it is danger of his judgment, as we see in the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14 and following verses. When we realize that apart from his grace we are "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17), then God has us where he wants us. He is calling us to seek him. Too long perhaps churches have depended on numbers, money, programs, leaders, reputation, and business sense. As never before I realize my life and ministry are nothing apart from God's infilling and empowering. I know the same is true for this church. Our absolute dependence on his presence alone can lead and enable us to do our mission in the Great Commission.

I realize that the success of the work God has for us to do within his kingdom will be given by his power and blessing alone. None of us nor all of us together can do what God alone can do for us and through us. His presence alone will give joy to our worship and unity to our fellowship and power to our witness and disciple making.

His presence within you will alone give you grace and encouragement in the life and work to which he has called you. Just as Paul strategically received an encouraging visit from the Lord or his angel, so I have been encouraged by the Lord's presence in the most difficult times of my life and ministry. This has been especially true for me in recent months. I am still learning to depend absolutely on the presence and promises of the Lord.

Conclusion:

Verse 17 of our text tells us that some worshiped Jesus and some doubted. We can surmise that these doubters didn't remain in a state of unbelief, but joined the other worshipers in their mission in the *Great Commission*.

Today you may be prepared to join the worshipers, *the People of the Great Commission*. Your presence here today is timely and strategic, just as with the doubters who heard Jesus on the mountain. You may sense Jesus is calling you into a life-changing relationship with him, and to be a learner and follower. As you do all he commands, you will become a discipler of others, beginning with your own family.

Some of you may be ready to join with the people of IBC, as we do our mission in the *Great Commission*. It saddens me to see gifted believers, who have so much to contribute to the life and ministries of IBC, waste their opportunity to invest in such a unique opportunity as IBC by squandering their time and talents on weekend tourism, which may be culturally interesting, but does nothing for the eternal kingdom.

Perhaps God may be calling someone else, maybe a young single or couple or even a mid-career or retired couple, into mission service. It could be missions right here in our "Jerusalem," or in our "Judea" or "Samaria" or to the ends of the earth.

In the words of Dallas Willard, because of the ignorance and neglect by the church regarding this Great Commission, it is better termed perhaps "The Great Omission" of the Church. As we reflect on our church's vision and mission, we need to declare our dependence on the Holy Spirit and the purpose he has for us—to empower us to be his Christ-like people on mission with him to a lost world, the one that for you and me begins at our doorstep.

All of us need to ask about the part God has for us. His calling is for us to join him in what he is doing, obeying the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, through the power of the Spirit and for his glory, at and through IBC Brussels.

Thoughts and questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:

1. What is the "agenda for the church" as given in Matthew 28:16-20?

2. What is your part and responsibility in the Great Commission?
3. Who do you think might have been those who doubted (17)? Why do you think they might have doubted Jesus instead of worshiping him?
4. The word translated “nations” (19) is the Greek word for “ethnic” or people groups. What are some of the people groups that you have contact with?
5. What is the work of making disciples (19)?
6. Reflect on your present effectiveness in witnessing to and making disciples within your “ethnic” groups.
7. How is your local church involved in the work of the Great Commission? How can you become more involved in encouraging your church’s involvement in the Great Commission?
8. What is the role of the Holy Spirit, the promised presence of Jesus (20) in your life as a follower of Jesus and in the life and work of the church?

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