

Union Baptist Church

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Lesson 2: The Promise of God's Presence
May 10, 2026

Scripture

Matthew 28:16-20 NKJV

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Biblical Context

Matthew 28:16–20 forms the climax and conclusion of Matthew's Gospel. Here the risen Jesus appears to His disciples, declares His universal authority, and commissions them to carry His mission to all nations. These verses gather together several themes that Matthew has emphasized throughout the book: worship and doubt, Jesus' divine authority, faithful discipleship, and the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's redemptive plan.

Matthew also frames his entire Gospel with the theme of God's presence. At the beginning, Jesus is identified as Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). At the end, Jesus promises, "I am with you always" (28:20). These two statements form intentional bookends showing that the story of Jesus is fundamentally the story of God dwelling with His people.

Explanation of the Verses

Verses 16-17: Worship Amid Doubt

The eleven disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions and returned to Galilee, the region where His ministry had first begun. There, on a mountain—a setting traditionally associated with divine revelation—they encountered the risen Lord, confirming the reality of the resurrection. Galilee, also known as "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt. 4:15) because of its significant non-Jewish population and cultural influence, not only marks the starting point of Jesus' earthly ministry but also foreshadows the expansion of the gospel mission to all nations.

The disciples respond with reverent worship, acknowledging Jesus' divine authority, yet some doubted. The Greek term translated as "doubt" can convey hesitation or uncertainty rather than outright disbelief. This suggests not rejection of the resurrection, but a struggle to fully comprehend the miraculous nature of what they were witnessing. The scene thus reveals both the disciples' growing faith and their humanity, offering a realistic portrayal of early discipleship, underscoring that even within a worshipping community, faith and hesitation can coexist—and that the Great Commission is entrusted to imperfect yet obedient followers.

Verse 18: Christ's Supreme Authority

Jesus intentionally approaches His disciples, affirming the reality of His resurrected presence and the fulfillment of His promise to rise from the dead. He declares that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him—an all-encompassing, divinely bestowed authority that confirms His exaltation, sovereign reign over all creation, and unity with the Father. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated His authority over demons, nature, sin, and the Law (Torah). Now, through the resurrection, that authority is fully revealed as universal and cosmic. This supreme authority serves as the foundation for the Great Commission that follows, legitimizing the mission entrusted to His disciples to proclaim the gospel.

Verse 19-20a: The Great Commission

The risen Jesus commissions His followers to continue His earthly mission by proclaiming the gospel. “Go” is the operative act; because Jesus is Lord of all, the gospel must now be carried to all people. This mission extends to every nation, crossing cultural and ethnic boundaries. The call to “make disciples” demands more than simply evangelizing and gathering converts. It involves leading believers into an enduring, obedient relationship with Christ.

Jesus identifies two essential practices in the disciple-making process: baptizing and teaching. Baptizing “in the name of” the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit signifies entry into fellowship with the triune God and incorporation into the covenant community. Teaching, however, involves more than the transmission of information; it is an ongoing process of shaping lives to observe that is, to actively live out everything Jesus commanded. In Matthew’s theology, discipleship is measured not by knowledge alone but by obedience. As Jesus Himself embodied perfect faithfulness to the will of God, His followers are likewise called to reflect that same obedience in their daily lives.

Verse 20b: The Promise of God's Presence

Jesus’ promise to remain with His followers echoes God’s Old Testament assurances of His abiding presence (cf. Exodus. 33:14; Deuteronomy 31:6) and points to His divine identity as the eternal “I AM.” For the disciples, this pledge affirmed that they would not face their mission alone. Although Jesus would no longer be physically present with them, His presence would continue through God’s enduring power and faithfulness. This promise fulfills the proclamation of the Messiah as Immanuel, “God with us” and extends to the culmination of God’s redemptive plan. In this way, the assurance of Christ’s presence grounds the disciples’ mission in hope, sustaining them through hardship as well as success. Moreover, because this promise reaches to the “end of the age,” it embraces successive generations of disciples, affirming that Christ’s presence remains a constant and sustaining reality in the life of the Church.

Contemporary Summary

Matthew 28:16–20 reminds believers that the Christian life flows from the authority, mission, and abiding presence of the risen Christ. The promise of God’s presence assures believers that they never walk alone. His presence is not limited to sacred spaces or extraordinary moments but faithfully accompanies believers in everyday life, in every season. Christ’s assurance, “I am with you always,” speaks directly into the real challenges believers face. His presence brings comfort when a doctor delivers unexpected news, courage when a job situation grows uncertain, and peace when family conflict weighs heavily on the heart. It offers guidance when one is unsure whether to pursue a new opportunity or navigate a

difficult relational decision. Even in quieter struggles, loneliness, anxiety, or the slow grind of daily routines, His presence is a steadying anchor, firm and secure (Hebrews. 16:19).

Believers are therefore encouraged to cultivate an awareness of God's presence through spiritual practices such as prayer, worship, and reflection. As Scripture teaches, drawing near to God leads to deeper fellowship with Him (James 4:8; Psalm 145:18). This relational nearness fosters spiritual growth and maturity, anchoring believers in hope and strengthening them for faithful living. Ultimately, the promise of Christ's presence stands as a central truth woven throughout the biblical story, "the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Questions for Discussion

Remember that this passage begins with disciples who worshiped but also doubted, and ends with Jesus promising His presence. This reminds us that our faith journey does not have to be perfect what matters most is remaining faithful and open to God, because God is with us always.

1. How might Jesus' promise to be with us always influence the way we approach challenges or uncertainties in our lives? How might it provide an anchor amidst life's storms?
2. How might this promise of presence shape our relationships and service within the church community?
3. The disciples worshiped Jesus, yet some doubted (i.e., hesitated or were uncertain). What does this passage tell us about doubt within a life of faith and obedience? What practical steps can we take to strengthen our faith in moments of doubt?
4. Jesus gives His commission before the disciples fully understand what they are experiencing. What does this teach us about waiting for greater clarity or more certainty before obeying God?
5. In what practical ways should Christ's universal authority shape believers' daily decisions, priorities, and relationships?

Memory Verse

*"...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
" Matthew 28:20*

Student Worksheet

The Promise of God's Presence

Read Matthew 28:16-20 NKJV and complete the following questions:

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Where did the eleven disciples meet Jesus after the resurrection?
 - A. In Jerusalem
 - B. At the Sea of Galilee
 - C. On a mountain in Galilee
 - D. In Bethany
2. How did the disciples respond when they saw Jesus?
 - A. All doubted and fled
 - B. They worshiped, but some doubted
 - C. All worshiped without hesitation
 - D. They questioned His authority

3. What did Jesus say had been given to Him?
 - A. Authority over Israel
 - B. Wisdom greater than Moses
 - C. Authority in heaven and on earth
 - D. Power over death only

4. What task did Jesus give His disciples?
 - A. To rebuild the temple
 - B. To rule over the nations
 - C. To make disciples of all nations
 - D. To remain in Galilee

5. According to Jesus, how long would He be with His disciples?
 - A. Until they reached Jerusalem
 - B. Until the Holy Spirit came
 - C. Until their mission was complete
 - D. Until the end of the age

True/False Questions

6. Only eleven disciples were present when Jesus met them after His resurrection.
 True
 False

7. Jesus instructed His disciples to baptize believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 True
 False

8. Jesus told His disciples to teach new followers to obey everything He had commanded them.
 True
 False

9. Jesus delivered the Great Commission before declaring His authority.
 True
 False

10. Jesus promised His presence with His followers in every circumstance, not just during their missionary work.
 True
 False

11. Personal Reflection Question:

How would your response to a current challenge in your life change if you genuinely believed Jesus was standing beside you in it — not in theory, but in reality? What fear, hesitation, or habit would lose its power?