



**VILLAGE
CHURCH**

Presbyterian (USA)

On Being Commissioned

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 28:16-20

October 9, 2022 – Sermon by Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

According to Matthew, this is the only conversation Jesus has with his disciples after his resurrection. There is no scolding or talk of snake-handling and an ascension like in Mark. There is no appearance on the road to Emmaus like in Luke. There is no doubting Thomas or beach cookout like in John. This is it.

There are 11 disciples because Judas, the betrayer, is not with them. They are in Galilee because Jesus told Mary to tell the disciples to go there, so they do. They go to a mountain, which is always a signal in the Bible that God is about to do something big. God loves mountains. God is less about beaches and more about mountains. They are on a mountain and Jesus appears to them for the first time since his death. When they see him, they worship him but—and I love this—some doubted. They see Jesus risen from the dead clearly standing in front of them but some still doubted. That’s proof that even we who doubt are still able to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Then Jesus makes a cosmic claim. “All authority in heaven and on earth.” My authority, my power, comes not just from this earth. My authority comes from heaven, too. That is how it is possible that I am standing here in front of you today, right now. Further, the power is not mine because I took it. The

power is mine because it was given to me by God who is the maker of the universe.

Then Jesus gives the disciples their task. “Go therefore and make disciples.” It’s sending language to be sure and the emphasis here is less on the “go” and more on the “make disciples.” The ‘make’ language is more like shaping and forming. It’s the same language used by potters and other crafts persons. The “go” is continuous. More like: As you are going, shape and form disciples.

The “of all nations” is important. Jesus is saying the good news of his life, death and resurrection is no longer just for Jews but is now for all peoples. He tells them to baptize—the mark of being claimed and of belonging. Make disciples and help them to belong. They will join with us and we will join with them. We will be family together. And teach them what I have taught you.

The church calls this the great commission. It is not the great suggestion. It is not just the great mission. It is the great ‘co-mission’ because we are being sent into the world together. This has formed the foundational text for the ministry of mission

We do not exist just for ourselves. We do not exist for our own comfort or safety. We exist for the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind. We are the Village Church on Mission Road and on Antioch Road. We do not have a mission. We are mission. We are the church when we are reaching beyond ourselves.

Several years ago, I was a visiting professor at St. Charles University in Prague. The Czech Republic is the most secular nation in Europe. I was talking with one of the professors and asked him why this was. He said that in 1948 when the communists took over Czechoslovakia, the bishop made a deal with the communists. Afraid for his churches, priests

and nuns, he told the communist leaders that if they promised to leave his churches alone, he would promise not to criticize them and would cooperate with them. The church became aligned with the government. The church even refused to shelter those who were being persecuted for their faith by the communist government. Many priests and nuns protested but the bishop held firm convinced he was doing the right thing.

Fifty-one years later when the communist regime fell, one of my friends, Milan Opechensky, a Presbyterian pastor in Prague, was in Wenceslas Square, in the heart of Prague, watching this miracle unfold. There were thousands in the square that night, he told me. Young people had started the revolution. And now there were old people and families and children. There was a new bishop and one of the leaders asked the bishop to speak and he got up and invited the crowd to pray the Lord's Prayer with him. He started to pray and then realized no one was praying with him. So he asked the crowd why no one was praying with him. Milan said that one young man who was sitting on top of a lamp post nearby shouted, "Old man, we do not know who you are or what you are saying." Then the bishop of Prague—barely holding back his tears—said, "I am so sorry, my children, we were wrong. We did not act as the church. Please forgive us. This is the Lord's Prayer. I will teach you how to pray."

Then he began to say the Lord's Prayer, line by line, and the crowd repeated after him. Milan told me he was weeping as he heard the bishop apologize and then as he heard the Lord's Prayer being prayed by thousands in his language in his home city. Every time the church focuses only on our own survival, we lose sight of our mission and we lose our spiritual and moral authority.

We are the Village Church on Mission Road and on Antioch Road. We do not have a mission. *We are* mission. We are the church when we are reaching beyond ourselves. Come on, Church! We were created for this!

Several years ago, I was privileged to preach at the First Presbyterian Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Across the doors, as you leave the sanctuary, in big bold letters, are the words: You are entering God's mission field.

So, after worship this morning there at Village on Antioch, you will enact our mission. You will do what Jesus told us to do. You will help care for foster kids and their foster families. And you will support our Food Pantry. And tonight for our Be the Church night, when you come back here at 6 p.m., we'll have pizza for you and then together we will put together lunches for City Union Mission. We will create shoe kits for children of God in Uganda. We will create hygiene kits for the Deaf International Community Church who serves refugees from Burma, Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Brazil. We will put together homework kits for Kansas City International Academy and birthday bags for Rosedale Middle School in Kansas City, Kansas. And we will assemble dental and vitamin kits to send with our Dominican Republic Medical Partnership.

We do this and so much more not just because we are good people or kind people. We do this because we are followers of Jesus Christ and he has sent us out to shape disciples, to baptize, to teach, to share the good news that by the grace of God we belong to one another. And Jesus says remember, remember! I am with you always, even to the end of the age!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.