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The Great Commission: Matthew 28: 16 – 20 (MSG)

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**16-17**Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion. The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about *worship*, about risking themselves totally.

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**18-20**Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”

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Today marks a significant moment in the lives of Cameron, Landen and Owen. They completed Pastor’s Class for several weeks in which we studied the Bible. They learned about the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They chose to make confession of faith and be baptized in light of their study.

Three addresses need to be made today.

First, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and extended family:

Today is a beginning in the life of these 3 boys. Cameron, Landen and Owen have relied on you thus far to be models of faith. They have accepted the gift of faith you passed down to them. They begin a journey of their own. The faith they move forward with is rooted in your gift. They will build upon it throughout their life.

They will continue to need you for faith formation. Part of that is continuing to be models of faith. They need you to continue to teach them to reflect on life through the lens of faith and teach them the theology of the faith.

They too need you to bring them to church. I’ll get to the church next, but we want to help you raise these boys to be men of faith who have a deep discipleship, a radical love of Jesus and a heart for service. We can help you if you bring them to us regularly.

Second, a word to the church:

These boys have been a part of your family as young people and now have officially become young members of the church. We must accept the Great Commission Jesus gave to His Disciples in Matthew to “baptize them and instruct them.” They have been baptized. We have been instructing them. We must continue that important work of instruction through Christian Education, but also by the way we act, the way we treat one another, the way we worship God, and the way we serve our community. It is my hope that these boys, with our help, will grow into men of faith who have a deep discipleship, a radical love of Jesus and a heart for service.

Third, Cameron, Landen and Owen:

It was an honor to baptize you. One of the greatest joys I have as a pastor is wading into the baptismal waters with young people making a commitment to Christ and embarking on a faith journey that is your own. I hope you hear the refrain here: it is my hope that with the support of your family and church family that you will grow into men of faith with a deep discipleship, a radical love of Jesus and a heart for service.

I ask you to look to us for guidance, for a modeling of faith, for help in interpreting life theologically and for a community that loves you and accepts you as you are. We will celebrate your joys and hold your concerns in prayer. We will be glad to share communion with you today. It is my hope that you will feel welcomed and affirmed within these walls.

Today, you received the gift of the Holy Spirit. When I think of new life in the Spirit, I am reminded of a passage from the book Forgotten God by Frances Chan about the Holy Spirit. He writes (p. 37):

For all its caterpillar life, [a caterpillar] crawls around a small patch of dirt and up and down a few plants. Then one day it takes a nap. A long nap. And then, what in the world must go through its head when it wakes up to discover it can fly? What happened to its dirty, plump, little worm body? What does it think when it sees its tiny new body and gorgeous wings?

As believers, we ought to experience this same kind of astonishment when the Holy Spirit enters our bodies. We should be stunned in disbelief over becoming a “new creation” with the Spirit living in us. As the caterpillar finds its new ability to fly, we should be thrilled over our Spirit-empowered ability to live differently and faithfully.

Through the waters of baptism, you have been raised to new life and given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The new life through the Spirit gives you new abilities in spiritual gifts. It challenges you to make manifest the Spirit in your lives that you may bear the fruits of: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. For the daunting task of living a transformed life of faith, the text from Matthew I read earlier offers you the promise of help. The 3 expressive manifestations of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are present with you. The Scripture promises: I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.

Finally, to all of you:

I’d like to remind us of the marks of discipleship. The Matthew 28 Great Commission asks us to baptize them and make disciples of them. That starts with us being disciples. These are the signs of our discipleship and the acts we want to teach Cameron, Landen and Owen:

First, we should attend worship regularly, whatever regularly means for you. For some, that means every Sunday. For others, that means once a month. For me, regularly is most definitely more often than Christmas and Easter.

Second, we should engage in activities that promote our spiritual growth. This includes reading and studying our Bibles and praying. It can also include reading devotions or going to women’s circle.

Third, we should participate in fellowship, such as lunches after church. We all need to eat and we all like to eat together. Fellowship feeds our souls and creates a family from a gathering of people. There are lots of opportunities to fellowship.

Fourth, we should give to the church a tithe or offering, in proportion to your income. We’ll talk more about this next month with our stewardship campaign.

Fifth, we should serve others. The Bible tells us that spiritual gifts are given for the building up of others. This includes caring for those in the church and reaching out in acts of mercy to those in our community.

I’ll leave you with the words of the Apostle Paul written in his 2nd letter to the Corinthian church. They are the closing words of his letter in chapter 13 (NIV).

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**11**Finally, brothers and sisters…put things in order, respond to my encouragement, be in harmony with each other, and live in peace—and the God of love and peace will be with you.

**12**[Greet one another] with a holy kiss. All of God’s people say hello to you.

**13**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.