

GLENKIRK CHURCH



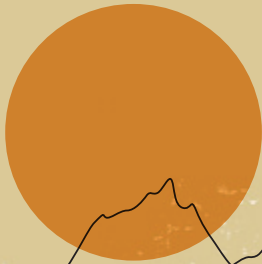
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCTOBER 16 - 20, 2023

Re-Formed:

Sermon on the Mount



Sermon Series 9/3 - 11/26

MONDAY

Read **Matthew 28:16-20**

One Last Meeting

Pastors Tim and Kate have made clear that Glenkirk's vision statement holds meaning *only if* it represents our covenant partners' *lived* reality. Thus, the intent of each sermon series, including the one we're engaged in this fall, is to form—or *re-form*—our character in ways that will bring this vision to life. Glenkirk's annual Missions Sunday comes amidst this series to focus on one particular phrase in our statement, "loving God *and* His world."

According to John 3:16, God loved the people of the world so intensely that He spared no expense—sacrificing His own life, Jesus' life—to rescue us from our hopeless condition. When Jesus heard, "Go," He responded. Now it's our turn. Jesus says, "Go." How will we respond?

The key Scripture passage for our consideration this week is Matthew 28:16-20, often referred to as "the Great Commission." Please take a moment right now to read this passage. You may want to read it in a variety of Bible translations if you have access to more than one.

If you've even heard of "the Great Commission," you know more than most church-going Christians. That's the finding of a major survey in 2019. If you can describe what it means, you belong to a tiny minority of Christian church goers. Given that this Matthew passage quotes

Jesus' final words to His followers, it would seem to deserve our focused attention.

Focused attention is the aim of our devotional today and each day this week. Let's begin with a reflection on some details. First, we note that eleven disciples gathered, indicating that this event occurred before selection of Judas's replacement. Second, the location is Galilee, where Jesus' ministry began, and on a certain mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

If someone asked you to meet up on a mountain in Glendora, would you know where to go?

Probably not, unless the place held special meaning for you both. What "mountain" in Galilee might hold extraordinary significance to the disciples?

QUESTIONS

Are you eager to hear from the Lord today? Find a quiet place where you can "be still" and "wait patiently" for His voice (Psalm 37:7). If you haven't heard the Lord's voice in a while, you may want to reflect on James 4:8-10. This jolting passage may seem harsh, but it begins and ends with a beautiful promise!

PRAYERS

For Missions Sunday Week

Today we call upon you, Father, to protect vulnerable children. Bring healing, Lord, to those who have experienced abandonment, betrayal, and abuse, some even "sold" by destitute parents or sin-warped souls. Give your servants wisdom and courage as we go to battle on their behalf.

TUESDAY

Read **Matthew 28:17-18a**

Jesus' Response to "Reasonable Doubt"

When the disciples arrived at the mountain where Jesus had told them to go, they saw Him! In chapter 28 of Matthew's Gospel, the detail-oriented former tax-collector provides an account of just one of Jesus' many post-resurrection appearances.

The sequence of events that Matthew sets forth may seem strange at first glance: the disciples see Jesus, worship Jesus, doubt what they see, and *then* Jesus comes to them. This sequence suggests that the disciples initially observed Jesus from a distance, perhaps as He approached them on foot, and immediately bowed down to worship Him. And yet, even as they worshiped (most likely down on their faces before Him), they struggled with disbelief.

In an earlier appearance to the disciples, Jesus rebuked them for doubting, but not here. In that case, described by Mark, they doubted the testimony of two men who had walked with Jesus all the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus, learning from Him many truths they had missed in their study of Scripture. The two men had humbly admitted their own disbelief, which persisted until Jesus hands broke bread. The eleven had no reasonable basis for rejecting the men's testimony.

Meanwhile, Luke kindly explains why the disciples struggled so mightily with doubt. He acknowledges that seeing a person known

to have died by crucifixion suddenly appear in the flesh would be startling. Understandably, they would assume they were seeing a ghost. That's how the rational mind responds. Luke goes on to explain that their belief was hindered by their joy and amazement. The resurrection seemed too wonderful to be true—just as many people think it today!

Matthew shows us Jesus' response when some of the disciples still doubted. He came closer to them, close enough for them to hear His familiar voice. He gave them a chance to recover from the shock of seeing a once-dead man fully alive. Remember, only three of these eleven had been with Jesus when Moses and Elijah met with the transfigured Christ on a mountain.

This passage guides us in God's response—and our response—to doubts about Jesus' resurrection. If this one miracle is demonstrably true, it effectively answers doubts about the many other transcendent miracles recorded in Scripture.

QUESTIONS

What plausible case supporting Jesus' resurrection can you prepare to share with others? If you need help in assembling the best evidence, don't hesitate to turn to the work of Dr. Gary R. Habermas, today's leading Resurrection scholar (garyhabermas.com).

PRAYERS

For Missions Sunday Week

Today, Lord of mercy, we ask you to walk beside frightened men, women, and children recently displaced from their homes and fleeing for their lives, whether from natural disasters or man-made crises. May they find shelter in You and in the helping hands and hearts of your people.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Matthew 28:18-19**

The Scope of Jesus' Authority

Despite what many Christians, even some pastors and theologians, may claim, Jesus leaves no room for doubt about the extent of His authority. “*All authority*” belongs to Him (Matthew 28:18). Not partial authority. Not temporary authority. Not limited authority. *All* authority.

What does this proclamation mean for you and me in the context of the Great Commission? It means Jesus holds authority over the universe and everything in it. So, whatever He intends to accomplish through us mere humans cannot be stopped, no matter what may come against us.

Because Jesus is King of kings, any decision by any government that opposes Christ's kingdom-advancing, disciple-making mission will, sooner or later, backfire. History has already given us countless examples of this truth. Even today, in nations where Christianity is forbidden by law, the body of Christ is growing and maturing more rapidly than anywhere else. The people in these restrictive regions show us what it means to “take up our cross” and follow Jesus.

The totality of Jesus' authority also means that people who worship any other god or gods have no real hope in this life. They live in deception, whether in opulent surroundings or abject poverty. They

live in fear and in futile efforts to silence it. They live in emptiness and in futile efforts to fill it. Their joys are shallow and short-lived. They live in restlessness and in futile efforts to find peace.

The question we all face is clear: What compassion, what courage, what confidence does the Lord's proclamation of “*all authority*” unleash in us who've committed our life to Him? What holds us back from full commitment to His clearly stated mission for us: to gather His lost sheep from all the people groups of the world?

Jesus' statement of authority means that His power goes *before* us and *with* us and *behind* us when we accept His calling. We can anticipate being guided and empowered for the task. We can also anticipate opposition or, at the very least, discomfort, which may be the most difficult hurdle for us to overcome.

Whatever the situation we're in today, let's be open to God's calling. Let's anticipate the incomparable blessing that comes when God works through us to accomplish His eternally significant plans and purposes.

QUESTIONS

If you are already active in supporting mission work with prayer and other resources—time, effort, finances, or all three—is there something more or different the Lord is stirring in you to do?

PRAYERS

For Missions Sunday Week

Prince of Peace, we call upon you to comfort those who suffer constant stress from having to worship you and advance your kingdom in secret. Please show us creative ways to encourage and meet their most significant needs without exposing them to added danger and distress.

THURSDAY

Read **Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:4-8**

Make Disciples, Baptize, and Teach

Disciples, take your mark, get set, go! But wait! This “commissioning” was different from the disciples’ assignments prior to Jesus’ death and resurrection. Then they had been sent specifically “to the lost sheep of Israel” to proclaim the coming of God’s kingdom.

In parable after parable, Jesus taught them about His kingdom, so different from the one they’d imagined. Their thinking was much like that of our day. “If only we had better leaders ... If only we could establish our own identity ... If only we had more [fill in the blank], then we’d be happy, flourishing, and *blessed*, in the fullest possible meaning of the word.”

The disciples had walked with Jesus closely enough to know the life God made for us to live. They had experienced friendship with God! They had learned what their religious leaders had either missed or distorted. They had come to recognize Jesus as *the Way, the Truth, and the Life* intended for all of humanity, not just for Israel.

Jesus’ approach to preparing these friends for their Kingdom-advancing mission was to do life with them, practicing prayer, explaining Scripture, and exemplifying character. He also knew that as humans, they would need something more to “*make disciples*” of others (Matthew 28:19), especially among people of unfamiliar cultures. To baptize them in the

name of the Triune God, calling them out of their false belief or unbelief, would be a major challenge!

For this mission they would need sustained supernatural empowerment. So, although Jesus said, “Go,” He also said, “Wait,” but only until the outpouring of God’s Spirit (an event foreshadowed by the Old Testament Feast of Weeks).

From that day forward and against all odds, Christ’s kingdom has been advancing. Jesus’ followers have gone, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to “do life” with people of unfamiliar tribes and cultures, introducing them to the Gospel and baptizing those who embrace it. If you’re a regular Glenkirk devotional reader, you’ve been praying for these individuals and ministries and the people they serve each week. Perhaps you’ve gone to visit them on the field. If you support Glenkirk financially, you’ve helped them stay “on mission” toward fulfillment of the Great Commission.

QUESTIONS

To God be the glory! Praise Him today for allowing you to be part of His plan for the ages. Ask what you can do to hasten His return by completing what He commissioned all of us to do!

PRAYERS

For Missions Sunday Week

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for showing us that you value *all* persons equally. We confess our reluctance to befriend those with special needs or differences of various kinds. Expand our hearts to love them and to learn what you want to teach us through them.

FRIDAY

Read **Matthew 28:20**

Never Alone

Jesus' disciples have witnessed, up close, how their own culture—the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—responded to their Messiah. When He invited them into God's kingdom—a kingdom of pure goodness, unlike any kingdom of this world—the vast majority turned Him down. In fact, many chose to join in the frenzied outcry for His torture and death!

Already they had run and hidden for fear of their lives, and we can certainly understand why. Only the face-to-face, repeated confirmation of His bodily resurrection drew them out into the open again. Here before them stood living proof of Jesus' ultimate authority over all creation, including the spiritual realm.

Here Jesus commissions them—and through them, you and me—to teach others “to obey everything I have commanded” (Matthew 28:20). We can't know what the disciples thought of this task, but to us it may seem utterly overwhelming. Does it mean memorizing every word Jesus spoke, including each reference to the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets? Must we all become curriculum specialists? Linguists? Pedagogical experts?

We can thank God for gifting His church with such people. They have a significant role to play. However, as we read through the four Gospels, we discover that Jesus' commands are not burdensome

at all. They are wonderfully straightforward and clear: come, follow, believe, abide, trust, love, hear, go, serve, pray. These are words and concepts we can all learn to obey and then teach as the Holy Spirit *re-forms* us day by day.

Already Jesus had told them how the world would treat them. Rejection and persecution lay ahead, not only for them but for all of us who embrace the Good News and join in taking it to the ends of the earth. Can anyone imagine a more appropriate word of reassurance than the one Jesus gave?

If you need a word of encouragement today, or any day, consider reading Matthew 28:20 in many different Bible translations and paraphrases. Web sites such as Bible Gateway (biblegateway.com) and Bible Hub (biblehub.com) are just two that provide multiple wordings.

The *Amplified Bible* unpacks the phrase “with you always” in this way: “remaining with you perpetually—regardless of circumstance, and on every occasion.”

QUESTIONS

How have you experienced the reality of this promise in your life? How have you seen it fulfilled when you reached out to someone from a non-Christian background or culture? Will you share that experience with someone this Sunday (or even sooner)?

PRAYERS

For Missions Sunday Week

Gracious Father, we want our fellowship of believers here at Glenkirk to fulfill the significant role you have assigned to us in *going* ourselves and in *sending* others to make disciples of all nations. I commit myself to whole-hearted service as a faithful ambassador of your eternal kingdom.



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave, Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833
GlenkirkChurch.org |  **@GlenkirkChurch** |  **Facebook: GlenkirkChurch**