

**4/5/26 - Easter      The Mountain of Resurrection      *Matthew 28:16-20***  
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**Can you think of a moment in your life when hope returned after a difficult season or a discouraging situation?** What helped you begin to see things differently? Sometimes it's a change within us – reframing the situation, taking a new perspective, seeking to learn from the experience to help us move forward, or seeing the challenge as an opportunity to begin again. We all can choose to learn and grow from tough circumstances. Sometimes, beyond our own approach, attitude, or perspective, something new and unexpected appears that gives us hope for the present and the future. Sometimes, hope returns as a combination of these choices and factors.

**The resurrection of Jesus represents the ultimate moment when hope returns after despair.** The disciples were shocked, heartbroken, and fearful about the future after Jesus' death, but then something new and unexpected happens – the resurrection of Jesus – and that changed their perspective and gave them new hope.

The Gospel of Matthew concludes with the resurrection of Jesus. Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary are told twice to tell the disciples to go to Galilee, where they would see the resurrected Jesus (*Matthew 28:7, 10*). The travel distance from Jerusalem to Galilee was over 70 miles, and with the need for the disciples to gather, this was not a same-day event, but part of Jesus' 40-day resurrection ministry. The meeting with Jesus on the mountain may have occurred at least a week or more after the resurrection. In the Bible, mountains are often places where God is revealed, and where important spiritual turning points occur. These high places symbolize closeness to God, moments of clarity, and preparation for what comes next.

**Matthew's gospel especially emphasizes mountains as locations where Jesus reveals his authority and mission.** Matthew uses the word for mountain (*oros*) **sixteen times**, structuring his presentation of Jesus around major "mountaintop" moments, and describing Jesus as the "New Moses," the Son of God, and the King who comes to establish the Kingdom of heaven on earth. Early in his ministry (*Matthew 4:1-11*), Jesus faces temptation from the devil on a very high mountain. Afterwards, Jesus teaches what we call the Sermon on the Mount, which reveals what it looks like to live as children of God in the kingdom of heaven (*Matthew 5-7*).

**Matthew 14:23** tells us Jesus *“went up the mountain by himself to pray.”*

**Matthew 15:29-31** says, *“Jesus went up the mountain”* and cured many people.

In **Matthew 17**, Jesus was transfigured on a mountain, revealing his divine glory to Peter, James, and John. In his final 24 hours, Jesus surrenders his will to God’s will on the Mount of Olives (*Matthew 26:36-46*), and is obedient, even to death, on a hill called Calvary (*Matthew 27:45-54*). **In Matthew, we see Jesus on mountains of temptation, teaching, prayer, healing, illumination, surrender, and obedience.**

Matthew’s gospel concludes with a final mountain scene – when the disciples meet the resurrected Jesus on a mountain in Galilee, and Jesus gives his last words of instruction. If this is the same site as the Sermon on the Mount, it further reinforces Matthew’s strong emphasis on **doing the will of the Father in heaven**, as taught by Jesus. In his final words, Jesus gives what’s known as **The Great Commission**, commanding the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything that he commanded them. The story of Jesus doesn’t end with the resurrection; the resurrection launches the mission of the church.

**Matthew 28:16-20.** “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.’*”

**The Mountain of Resurrection is a place of Worship, Power, Purpose, and Promise.** On the mountain of resurrection, the disciples **worship Jesus**; and the risen Christ sends his followers into the world with **power, purpose, and with the promise of his presence.**

**Let’s start with Worshiping Jesus.** When the disciples see Jesus, *“they worshiped him – but some doubted.”* Throughout Matthew’s gospel, Jesus invites people **to follow him**; he doesn’t tell people *to worship* him. Yet, we see that people worship Jesus, from the beginning of Matthew’s gospel to the end, recognizing his divine kingship. **Matthew 2:11** depicts the Magi – or wise men – presenting gifts of

gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the young child, Jesus, in a house, and bowing before him in worship. They are Gentiles acknowledging Jesus as King, Priest, and Suffering Savior, at the beginning of his life. In **Matthew 14:33**, when Jesus appears to the disciples on the water and gets into the boat with them, “those in the boat **worshiped him** saying, **‘Truly you are the Son of God.’**” This is strikingly similar to what a Roman centurion said, who was present when Jesus died on the cross. The soldier exclaimed (*Matthew 27:54*), **“Truly this man was God’s son.”** In **Matthew 28:9**, the women who encountered the risen Jesus, “*came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.*” In all these cases, the Greek word that’s used (*proskynéō*), often signifies bowing down or prostrating oneself in homage. If someone we respect, or someone of high office or position, walks into a room, it’s appropriate to stand up, as a sign of respect. When people come into the presence of Jesus, rather than standing, they often fall at his feet, as a sign of worship, awe, and humility. It’s an acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Kings.

Let’s not forget, though, that Matthew says, when they saw him, **they worshiped him; but some doubted.** Perhaps you hear that, and your response is, “C’mon disciples! You’re with the risen Christ. You spent three years with Jesus. Witnessed miracles. You saw Jesus bring people back to life. How can you be shocked by Jesus being raised from the dead when he told you three times (*Matthew 16:21–23; 17:22–23; and 20:17–19*) that he would die and be raised on the third day? How can you doubt?” That’s one possible response, but there’s another way to look at it.

I’m grateful for the honesty and vulnerability of the disciples in relating their experiences with Jesus because they include their moments of weakness, failure, and doubt, so that we don’t feel like failures when we have those moments, too. Matthew including this detail, **some doubted**, reminds us that faith can include moments of uncertainty. Even those who walked closely with Jesus struggled to fully grasp what was happening. Nobody expected the tomb to have no body in it. Nobody expects to see someone who was killed, up and about three days later. That’s not a rational expectation to have. It would be natural to doubt that Jesus was truly back.

Among us, today, some are worshiping that Christ is risen, some doubt that the resurrection happened, and some people may feel a bit of both. Don’t feel bad if, at times, you wrestle with doubt. Even among the eleven disciples, who spent so much

time with Jesus, there was some doubt, initially, about what they were witnessing and experiencing. Questions and doubts don't disqualify us from following Jesus; they can be part of a growing faith.

After we learn that they **worshiped him**, but some doubted, Jesus then speaks some of the most important words in the New Testament. They are words about his **Power**. He declares, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**" This is a staggering claim to make, and the implications couldn't be greater. Who can say, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**"? Only the one who has received that power from God. The divine Son. The final king. Jesus declares that God has given him all power and authority, in heaven and earth. He has the absolute final word. There are no elections, no debates, no votes, no asking what other people think. Jesus has power and authority that no one else has. He is the only one who should have it, because only he has proven to have the character to wield such power on behalf of God and for the benefit of others.

You may be familiar with the famous 1887 quote by British historian Lord Acton, "**Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.**" It suggests that holding authority inherently risks moral decay, and total control makes corruption inevitable. Acton argued that no political or religious leader is above moral scrutiny. Power – in the hands of someone who is lacking in character, virtue, or ethics – is dangerous. If someone is going to have phenomenal cosmic powers, it's only good news – and not terrifying – if that person is Jesus, who was without sin, and filled with and motivated by self-sacrificing love. The mission the disciples receive is grounded not in their strength or ability, but in Christ's authority and power. This reminds us that Christ's mission is not something we accomplish alone – it flows from the power of Jesus. Jesus could wield the authority and power he's been given in any way he wanted, and he uses it to send his disciples out to change the world.

The risen Christ uses his power and authority to give the disciples their **Purpose**. He commissions his followers to **go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything he has commanded them.**

When my dad graduated from Colby College in 1954, he received his commission in the United States Air Force. Some of you received a similar commission. **A**

**commission is “an instruction, command, or duty given to a person or group of people.”** That’s what his followers receive from Jesus. For the three years after my dad received his commission, the US Air Force told my father where to go and what to do. He went to Colorado, an island or two in the Pacific, and eventually, to Yokota Air Base on the island of Honshu, Japan. Accepting his commission bound my dad to be obedient to the authority that granted it.

The final words of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew are known as The Great Commission. Jesus gives a command, an instruction, a duty, to all of us who would be his followers, and we’re to be obedient to Christ. Jesus says, **“Go.”** We can’t stay where we are, we can’t expect people to come to us on the mountain; we need to go, to move, to get out of where we’re comfortable, we must take the initiative. What we must go and do is to **Make Disciples** – not church members, but disciples – who will become like Jesus in every aspect of life. Making disciples involves helping people grow in a lifelong relationship with Christ. It includes teaching, mentoring, and modeling a life of faith.

And we’re to **Make Disciples** of individuals from **every nation. This is the inclusive, global vision of Jesus’ movement.** Earlier in Matthew’s gospel (*Matthew 10:5*), Jesus told the disciples not to go anywhere among the Gentiles. With the Great Commission, Jesus states that the good news is now to be shared *with all people. Revelation 7:9* describes heaven this way, *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, **from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.**”* That’s only possible in heaven if Jesus’ followers on earth go and make disciples of all nations.

There may be someone listening who doubts that Jesus was raised from the dead and thinks this whole following Jesus thing is a fairytale, and you’re only here because you’re trying to humor a family member before having a good meal. If that’s you, I want to invite you to ponder this – Jesus likely spoke these words to his eleven disciples, some women, and a few others who were part of his movement. He said these words to a tiny group of people in Galilee. He told them to go and make disciples **of all nations.** Most of them hadn’t been more than one hundred miles from where they were born. They didn’t know North and South America existed. You can doubt the resurrection, but it’s hard to dispute the fact that a small group of people, a group as tiny as a mustard seed, succeeded in sharing the good news and making disciples in virtually every place

on earth over the last two thousand years, thanks to the resurrection, power and authority of Jesus. Think of the empires and kingdoms that have risen and fallen around the world over the last 2,000 years, yet Jesus' movement, the kingdom of heaven, continues to grow and spread.

Jesus offers power, purpose, and an invitation to a life of fulfilment and adventure, unlike anything else we might experience. If we're going to serve Jesus, like the first disciples, we need his power because the task is beyond human capacity. We're also to **baptize** people, as sign of being initiated into the new community with Jesus at the center. Jesus says the disciples are to be, *"Teaching them **to obey** everything that I have commanded you."* Jesus doesn't say, *"Teach them **to believe** everything that I have commanded you."* The command is to obey, not merely believe. And Jesus says the two greatest commandments are loving God and loving our neighbors.

There's a danger for those of us who have been church goers or Jesus followers for many years – that we can be educated beyond our level of obedience, that we know more of the Bible than we live and practice daily. Oswald Chambers wrote, *"Obey God in the thing he shows you, and instantly the next thing is opened up. God will never reveal more truth about himself **until you have obeyed what you know already.**"* Obedience is important when one accepts a commission. If my dad had decided, after accepting his commission, *"I don't want to go to Japan, I think I'll go to Hawaii instead. I'll ditch the uniform and get another job that lets me spend a lot of time at the beach."* That would be considered desertion. In a less serious situation, if you're not where you're supposed to be in the military, you're AWOL, Absent Without Leave. As followers of Jesus, we want our lives to demonstrate that we're good soldiers of Jesus Christ, not like someone who is AWOL, or even worse, a deserter to the cause.

If we call Jesus our King, if we believe he is who he claims to be, then we'll strive to do what he tells us to do, and it will change our life. It isn't always easy to be obedient, and we shouldn't expect it to be. Our next series, starting at the end of April, is based on the Letter to the Hebrews, and is called **Anchored in the Unchanging Christ**. **Hebrews 5:8-9** tells us how Jesus learned obedience. *"**Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source for eternal salvation for all who obey him.**"* In **2 Timothy 2:3-4**, Paul writes, *"**Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ***

**Jesus.** *No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; **the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer.***

Finally, Jesus gives a **Promise** that has encouraged Christians for centuries: ***“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*** The mission of the church is not carried out alone. The risen Christ goes with his people wherever we go. He is still Emmanuel, *“God with us,”* and what he commands us to do, he empowers us to do, and he promises to do it with us. The resurrection confirms that Jesus is the Son of God and that his message is trustworthy. Because Christ is alive, our faith is not based only on past events, but on a living relationship with him. The resurrection shapes the way we live and serve. The risen Lord calls us to live as his disciples, and to share his love and hope with the world.

Those of you who served in the military hopefully received an honorable discharge when your service was completed; however, we're never discharged from being a disciple. Have you accepted your commission? Are you fulfilling it?

Mountaintop experiences are meaningful, but discipleship happens in everyday life. Just as the disciples had to leave the mountain, we're called to carry what we have learned and experienced with Jesus into every aspect of our life, seven days a week. The disciples climbed the mountain in Galilee, unsure of what they would encounter. **They left that mountain with hearts inspired by worship, and filled with power, purpose, and a promise.** The same risen Christ who met them meets us today, and calls us to follow him into the world with hope, courage, and faith.

**Closing Prayer:** Faithful God, thank you for revealing yourself to us through Jesus Christ. Thank you for loving the world so much that you gave your only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Through Jesus' words, we learn how to live; through his glory, we see who he truly is; through his surrender, we learn trust; through his sacrifice, we receive forgiveness; and through his resurrection, we receive hope, power, and purpose. Help us to live as faithful disciples, who listen to King Jesus, follow where he leads, and share his love with the world. In the name of the risen Christ we pray, Amen.

**Blessing:** “Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (*Hebrews 13:20-21*).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. When the disciples see the risen Jesus, the text says they worshiped him, but some doubted. Why do you think both worship and doubt appear in this moment?
2. Jesus begins by saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Why is this important before he gives the Great Commission?
3. Jesus commands his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations.” What does it mean to make disciples, rather than simply gain converts?
4. Jesus instructs his followers to baptize and teach people to obey everything he commanded. Why do you think belonging (baptism), learning (teaching), and obedience (faithfulness) are important parts of faith?
5. Jesus promises, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Why might this promise have been especially important for the disciples?
6. How does the resurrection change the way we think about our purpose and mission, as followers of Jesus?