

Monday, June 15, 2020

Great Commission, Great Commandment, or both? -Pastor Hank French

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" (Matthew 28:16-20).

Today's text is usually known as the Great Commission. Jesus gathered his disciples after the resurrection and said to them: "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...." There's the commission—go and make disciples. That's the "missionary mandate" of the church—help people who do not know Jesus come to know Jesus and then baptize them into the community of faith.

It is an important commission. When I was serving as a missionary in Japan, many times I would encounter people who did not know Jesus but, when they heard the gospel of God's love and forgiveness, something resonated within them. They responded by wanting to learn more of what Jesus said and did, and most of them were baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The Great Commission was carried out. Their lives were transformed

For many Christians, the purpose of the Great Commission is just to save the unsaved. As far as it goes, that's true, but it doesn't go far enough. Christianity is not just about life after death; first and foremost, it is about this life. As Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Life that makes sense right here and now.

You see, Jesus did not just say, "Go and make disciples,..." he also said, "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Which begs the question, what is the "everything" that Jesus commanded his followers?

It is an easy question to answer. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

This is what makes life worth living in the here and now; this is the abundant life Jesus wants for us: to love God and to be loved by God; to love others and to be loved by others. It

is both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Invite folks into the community of faith and teach them everything Jesus commanded us—love.

Prayer: Lord, you gave the Great Commission and you gave the Great Commandment to your followers that they might have life and have it abundantly. Thank you. Amen.