*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

April 17 - 22

“The Life of Jesus: Commissioning”

**Monday, April 17 Matthew 28:16-20**

*“Make disciples”*

 Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had instructed the women who had come to the tomb on Easter morning to tell his followers to go to Galilee where they would see Jesus. The journey took about three days, an adequate amount of time to remove them from the events in Jerusalem and prepare them for their new assignment. Jesus begins his commission by declaring that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth; clearly, his authority to send out the disciples into the world in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is divine authority.

 The emphasis of the sending is on making disciples. The word for “disciple” is *matheteuo*, meaning a follower, a learner. As disciples we are always identifying with and learning from Christ, and these who have been with Jesus for the past three years are now to go out and help others become what they themselves are. Further, while their ministry with Jesus has been largely limited to Palestine, the commission is for them now to go to “all nations.”

*As your disciple, Lord, I am committed to helping others become your disciples. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 18 Mark 16:15-18**

*“Preach the good news”*

 Based on the available ancient manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel, most modern biblical scholars believe that verses 9-20 of Mark 16 are a later addition to the original writing. Whether or not this is so, these verses do not contradict other parts of the Bible and are worthy of our attention. In verses 15-18 Jesus comes into a room where the eleven disciples are reclining at dinner.

 After rebuking them for their unbelief and hardness of heart for not having believed those who had seen him after he had risen, Jesus goes directly to the purpose of his appearance. He gives the Great Commission for world evangelization along with the promise of salvation to those who believe and the power to do miracles. So much dispute centers around this montage of the spiritual signs of casting out demons, speaking in tongues, handling snakes and healing the sick that it is difficult to say more about them. A wise person has suggested that these signs may follow those who believe, but none of them should be made a necessary teaching that diverts us from the central truth of the Great Commission which is the message of the Good News.

*As your disciple, Lord, I am committed to sharing the Gospel with others. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 19 Luke 24:44-49**

*“Take this message of repentance to all the nations”*

 This third resurrection passage in Luke adds to the portrait of the resurrection’s significance. Luke 24:1-12 highlighted the empty tomb; 24:13-35 presented an appearance by Jesus and stressed how Scripture prophesied the resurrection. The present passage reveals Jesus’ post-resurrection commission to his disciples to go to all nations with the message of repentance. He reminds them that he predicted what has taken place. A crucified and raised Messiah is not an adjustment in God’s plan; this path was in the design all along.

 The disciples have served as witnesses of the events surrounding Jesus. They saw him hang on the cross and have now seen his resurrected body. Their calling is to share what they know has taken place. Jesus will send them out, but not before he has equipped them. To this end he will give them the Spirit from his Father. The Spirit is the one who enables us to witness and testify to Jesus effectively. As God’s plan moved ahead, the disciples were a major part of its advance, as are we today.

*May your Spirit, Lord, strengthen me to share the Good News with others. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

April 17 - 22

“The Life of Jesus: Commissioning”

**Thursday, April 20 John 21:15-19**

 *“Feed my sheep”*

 Jesus speaks personally to Peter. This is a searching time of healing and restoration. The “backslider” who denied Jesus three times during his trial is not only welcomed home, but commissioned by the great Shepherd to care for his sheep.

 The question that Jesus addresses to Simon Peter – and the seriousness of the encounter is underlined by Jesus’ use of Peter’s full name – is concerned with Peter’s heart, “Do you love me more than these?” This is the critical question. Does Peter love Jesus unselfishly and unconditionally more than he cares for fishing with all of its trappings, or anything else? Peter’s immediate response is affirmative. Twice more Jesus asks Peter the question, and each time there is a positive answer. Finally Peter responds, “Lord, you know all things.” Jesus knows Peter’s heart, whether his act of repentance has truly brought him back into the fullness of love for Jesus. Does Peter love Jesus so deeply and personally that he will faithfully obey him in the mission that he is being given? Jesus affirms Peter’s love, inviting his continued discipleship.

*May my love for you, Lord, be without condition. Amen.*

**Friday, April 21 Acts 9:1-19a**

*“You will be told what you must do”*

 The only thing that came near matching the panic Saul felt on the road was the fear Ananias felt when the Lord appeared to this leader of the Damascus church and told him to go to the persecutor of those who follow Jesus. But the Lord had plans for Ananias and Saul. Ananias was to be a reconciler and bring an awesome message to his feared enemy. Further, the Lord was gracious to share his strategy for Saul in order to allay the fears in Ananias. Note that the Lord did not tell Ananias to tell Saul all that he had planned. That would have been too much too soon for blinded Saul. The Lord seldom gives us our life plan all at once. He gives us just enough to help us set our long-range goals in him and then walk in obedience each day.

 When Ananias went to Saul, he found the feared persecutor alone, blind, and helpless. All the hurt and fright Ananias had felt for what this man had done to his brothers and sisters in Christ drained away. The same Lord who told him to go to Saul lived in him and had given him his own character traits of love and forgiveness.

*Wherever you send me, Lord, I will go with your love and forgiveness. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 22 Galatians 1:11-24**

*“It pleased God to choose me and call me”*

 As Paul reflected upon all that had happened in his life, he felt that God had set him apart for a special task even before he was born. This conviction is rooted in the marvelous Old Testament prophets in whom Paul was so thoroughly grounded. Life is not just an eddy of a purposeless stream; it is a part of God’s mainstream. “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesperson to the world” (Jeremiah 1:5).

 Two truths emerge here. One, God had a plan for Paul – as he does for every person, for you and for me. Paul saw the intervention of God in his life not as a random event but as a part of the eternal plan of God. Second, Paul knew that he was chosen for a task – “that I might preach Christ among the Gentiles” – not for personal honor and glory but to bring honor and glory to God, through service. When God calls us he calls us to service.

*Show me, Lord, the service to which you are calling me. Amen.*