

# Awakening the Missionary Impulse – A Meditation on Matthew 28

By Don McCrabb

## A Retelling of the Great Commission – Matthew 28

Can you imagine yourself as one of the apostles?

Put yourself in their shoes. You were moved by Jesus. His teachings spoke to your heart. When you were with him, felt incredibly alive, free, loved and full of hope. No one persuaded you; you wanted to follow him.

You were there when Jesus fed the 5,000, gave sight to the blind, and raised a young man from the dead. He received a royal welcome into Jerusalem. You celebrated Passover with him.

You were also there when the soldiers came and dragged Jesus off to be crucified. Scared for your own life, you hid in the shadows abandoning him to death on the cross. You were a puddle of fear, sadness, anger, and despair. You disgust yourself.

Disoriented, you stumble upon the others. You look to Peter but that rock is crushed, broken by grief and disbelief. The Sabbath comes and goes. It's over - time to pick up the pieces of your life and move on.



But just as you begin to leave two women disciples arrive with astonishing news. Jesus is alive! Remember the mountain in Galilee? Remember what he said? Go there and you will see him.

Of course you go. You gather with the other disciples and make arrangements for the journey. It will take four days. Along the way, you cry, confess, and tell stories.

You see the mountain in the distance. A lone person is descending from the top. Before you know it, Jesus is approaching you. You are gapping-mouth-open astonished. Some fall down to worship him. Others cannot believe it. Peter collapses to his knees. And still Jesus approaches. He embraces you. You are alive again. Jesus reaches out to everyone. He turns to Peter last, lifting him up, restoring his strength.

Jesus calls you together. "All power 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."<sup>1</sup> He pauses here, letting his eyes meet each one. Some of us are giddy with joy, others cannot stop the tears.



"Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." Suddenly, your heart begins to burn within you. You have a lot to say, a lot to share, a lot to tell. You remember with crystal clarity everything he taught, every moment he was with you, all the experiences you shared. You know now who you are and what you are about. It is time to go. But you hesitate. You want to stay.

Jesus knows your heart. He is speaking again. Amazingly, he is talking to everyone and only you at the same time. "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

## Personal Reflections

Stay here. Stay with Jesus resting his eyes in yours. Imagine piercing – into your soul – eyes that are, at the same time, warm, innocent, and accepting. By looking deeply into Jesus' eyes, your own blindness melts away. You have a lot to offer. You know who you are, what the Lord means to you, what he asks of you, and what he has given you.

The stark truth of mission is hard to believe. God sends you into the world because there is something the world needs that only you can give. Can you accept this truth? God is sending you into the world because the world needs you. This is not ego. It is faith; God does not make junk and he has made each and every one of us for a purpose. Consider this passage from Psalm 139.

I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;  
wonderful are your works!  
My very self you know.

My bones are not hidden from you,  
When I was being made in secret,  
fashioned in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw me unformed;  
in your book all are written down;  
my days were shaped, before one came to be.



Jesus is continually teaching us what it means to be a missionary disciple. We have been sent to the whole world. As disciples of Jesus, there is no place or people beyond our sphere of concern. Pope Francis reminds us that mission is an "immense work of mercy, both spiritual and material."

Four suggestions on how to hear the call to mission:

- 1) Let go of any guilt. Mercy flows from a grateful heart. The Lord has commanded. The Lord is also patient. Let the call to mission rise up in your own heart, through your own experiences and desires. Listening deeply to the Lord may require you to unplug from all the noise of modern life. Can you just be with the Lord for 15-20 minutes of silence?
- 2) Listen to your heart. God has touched your heart with a face - a refugee child, a poor young mother from Calcutta, or a coffee farmer from Guatemala. Welcome them into your life. How can you extend your sphere of influence to touch their lives?

- 3) Imagine. See in your mind's eye your ideal mission experience. Where would you go? How long would you stay? Are you learning the language of the people you are called to serve? How many others are you working with and what type of work are you doing day by day?
- 4) Discern. Talk through your thoughts and feelings about mission with your parish priest or spiritual director.

## United States Catholic Mission Association

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## UNITED STATES CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

415 Michigan Avenue, NE – Suite 102  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-832-3112  
[www.uscatholicmission.org](http://www.uscatholicmission.org)

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