

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
149 Main Street
Madison Heights, VA 24572

MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 1

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Open doors-----Open hearts

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The Great Commission

The Scripture Matthew 28:16-20 is commonly referred to as "The Great Commission." It is where the resurrected Jesus talks to the disciples and instructs them to go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. I used this Scripture on the 1st Sunday of the year for a message that pertains to our service of installation. There have been many comments on the significance of the message so I have rewritten most of it for this article.

Jesus told the disciples that all authority has been given to him. This is very significant in that it reveals his divine authority. It is an official order, a commission, a commandment. We are followers of Christ. Therefore, we are to do what Christ tells us to do. It is our responsibility as disciples to go. That means that we are specifically instructed to take action. As followers of Christ we are to continue the divine mission that Christ started and delegated to his disciples and commanded them to continue. We are to make disciples. We are to baptize. We are to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. That means we are not just to teach them about Jesus, who he is, what he said, and what he did. We are to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. We are all called to teach people to obey the word.

On installation Sunday attention is given to the various leaders to commit them to faithfully fulfill their duties. But the ideal scenario is that the church accomplishes what Christ has called the church to do. The disciples are to be obedient disciples and are to teach others to be obedient disciples. Furthermore, as disciples, it is the word of Christ that is our central theological message. According to the great commission, the primary goal of ministry is discipleship. This does not just apply to the leaders; it applies to the whole congregation. Whereas, we are a priesthood of believers, we all have the divine mission to go and make disciples and teach them to obey the teachings of Jesus. This takes a powerful commitment that many, if not most, cannot, or do not, obey. The goal is to live a life molded after Christ. So we all have the ethical responsibility to teach others to obey Jesus.

Every year I make an effort to remind all church leaders to focus on pleasing God. Do not worry about the institution, attendance numbers, or finances. If you focus on pleasing God then all of the other stuff will take care of itself. Live your life in a way that makes pleasing God your top priority. When confronted with conflict and complaints I sometimes ask "what does this have to do with pleasing God?" The goal of the question is to make sure we are set on divine centeredness. When faced with our problems - and we all have problems - I want you to take the time to see this image. I encourage you to take a moment now and allow for some space and time to see this image. When you look at Jesus, see him there, hung up high on the cross. This is a public display of brutality where he has been tormented and tortured. He is in far worse shape than the criminals beside him because he has been beaten with a whip and thorns stuck into his head. This is a very grotesque scene. He is bleeding from where chunks of his flesh have been torn from his body and from the thorns are stuck in his head. See the image. There is blood dripping down his body from his head down to his feet. See the image of Jesus there suffering in pain and agony. Stand there at the foot of the cross and look up into his eyes. Make your appeal to him there at the foot of the cross. Make your appeal to the head of the church, the suffering, dying, Savior. Tell him about your problems. It is there at the foot of the cross we come face to face with the reality of the significance of God's love and grace and the insignificance of our problems. Let us take the divine commission to heart and go and make disciples and teach them to obey everything.

In Christian love,

George Harris