

Matthew 28:16-20

Read the passage: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

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This passage which ends the Book of Matthew is commonly referred to as ***The Great Commission***.

The commissioning can be highlighted by the verbs in verses 19 and 20:

- Go
- Make disciples
- Baptize
- Teach
- Obey
- Remember

These verbs represent the key activities that Jesus wants his followers to be doing.

Verse 16. The disciples are now 11 rather than 12 because Judas, who betrayed Jesus to the Roman soldiers, has killed himself.

As Matthew tells the story of the resurrection, at this point, Jesus has only appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. They are told (Verse 10), "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Verse 17. I love this verse:

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Here there are in the presence of the risen Jesus and they both worship and doubt! Sounds like the origins of the United Church to me.

Note that in Verse 9 the two Mary's have worshipped Jesus by prostrating themselves and clasping his feet. This was a traditional way of showing homage and reverence. This action is likely what also happens here.

I would have said that these verses are the first times that Matthew records the disciples worshiping Jesus, but there is an interesting precursor of these themes of resurrection, worship and doubt in the story of Jesus walking on the water, Matthew 14:22-33.

When the disciples first see Jesus, their response is one of terror - "It is a ghost!" Which of course was also the reaction to seeing Jesus resurrected.

We then have the great scene of Peter getting out of the boat and walking on the water himself until he gets distracted by the strong wind. In this scene we see that the authority that has been given to Jesus and that his being with us embeds us in that same authority. But when we become distracted, we sink.

Jesus chastises Peter, "Why did you doubt?" And when they get into the boat, the disciples worship Jesus.

These 4 short verses touch on several crucial themes:

- The authority of Jesus
- The purposes of the church: go, make disciples, baptize, teach, obey, remember.
- The presence of the resurrected Jesus.