

“The Final Marching Orders of King Jesus”

Matthew 28:18-20

Introduction: 1) It is embedded in our mission statement: “SEBTS seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by equipping students to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission.” I speak of the “Great Commission,” a phrase you actually do not find in the Bible but one that accurately captures the last words, the final marching order of King Jesus.

2) Last words, by their very nature, are meant to be lasting words, or at least they should be, though this is not always the case. Consider for example the following:

Alexander the Great, who had conquered land from Macedonia to Pakistan, died at the age of 33, with his boots on, weeping: “There are no more other worlds to conquer!”

Anne Boleyn, Protestant wife of Henry the Eight. Before being decapitated on orders of her husband Henry the Eight, she quipped: “The executioner is, I believe, very expert; and my neck is very slender.”

Henry the Eighth: “So, now all is gone – Empire, Body and Soul!”

Leonardo da Vinci: Italian inventor and artist, died in 1519. “I have offended God and mankind because my work did not reach the quality it should have.”

Machiavelli: Florentine diplomat and political philosopher, died in 1527. “I desire to go to Hell and not to Heaven. In the former I shall enjoy the company of popes, kings and princes, while in the latter are only beggars, monks and apostles.”

Jean Paul Sarte, atheist, existentialist, philosopher: “I failed!”

John Newton b. 1725. D. 1807: authored the hymn “Amazing Grace.” “I am still in the land of the dying; I shall be in the land of the living soon.”

Heinrich Heine, “God will forgive me. It’s his job.”

Stalin, his daughter Svetlana Allilujewa, who in March 1953 was called to the dying dictator in his dacha in Kunzewo, stated: “Father died terribly and difficult. God gives the righteous an easy death.”

Karl Marx, born in a Christian Jewish family, founder of Communism. On his deathbed surrounded by candles burning to Lucifer, screamed at his nurse who asked him if he had any last works: “Go on, get out! Last words are for fools who haven’t said enough.”

Cesare Borgia, statesman: “I have taken care of everything in the course of my life, only not for death, and now I have to die completely unprepared.”

Thomas Hobbes, English Philosopher: “It’s my turn, to take a leap into the darkness!”

David Hume, the Atheist, He cried: “I am in flames!” His desperation was a horrible scene.

Mozart: “The taste of death is upon my lips. I feel something that is not of this earth.”

Polycarp martyred in about 168 A.D. “Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong: How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”

Elvis: "I hope I haven't bored you," (ending his last press conference).

Al Capone: "You can get more with a kind word and a gun than you can get with a kind word alone."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Before being hanged at Schoenberg Prison by one of Hitler’s men, “This is the end for me, the beginning of life.”

Transition: Jesus last words were meant to be “lasting words.” They inform what our divine assignment is until He comes again.

2) The last words of Jesus were not uttered by a dying man, but by the resurrected Lord! His mind was keen and His orders clear for the church’s mission until He comes again at the “end of the age” (v. 20).

3) These marching orders are for you and they are for me! What should occupy us until we see Him face to face in death or at His coming? It is the Great Commission. Note 3 simple components of it.

I. Acknowledge His Power. 28:18

- All (4X)
- Echos of Daniel 7:13-14
- John Piper, “The risen Christ is great, greater than you ever imagined. Here is our witness to the world: the risen Christ is your King, and He has absolute unlimited authority over your life. If you do not bow and worship Him and trust Him and obey Him, you commit high treason against your King, who is God over all.”
- Hudson Taylor, great missionary to China: “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply!”

Transition: Our King has all power!

II. Obey His Plan. 28:19-20

- The imperative: “make disciples”
- The 3 participles receive imperative force.
- There is no need to stop and pray and ask God should we go to the nations and make disciples. We are told to go!
- Go, to the 6,898 unreached people groups that total 2.8 billion who have little or no witness of the gospel. Go to the unreached and underserved areas of North America that are spiritually dark without the gospel.
- John Keith Falconer, English aristocrat, Arabic scholar at Cambridge, athlete and world cycling champion in 1878, missionary to Yemen, who died at the age of 31 (May 11,

1887) from Malaria and was buried there: “I have but one candle in life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with darkness.”

- C.T. Studd (1880-1931) one of the Cambridge 7 who served as a missionary in China, India and Africa. He died in the Congo and was buried there in a simple grave: “Some wish to live within the sound of a [church] bell; I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell!” And his last words: “Hallelujah!”
- David Livingstone, missionary to Africa, who died on his knees in prayer and whose heart was buried under a Mvula tree near where he died (1873): “Sympathy is no substitute for action.” And, “without Christ not one step; with Him, anywhere!”

III. Trust in His Promise. 28:20

- Who: King Jesus
What? Am with you
How long: Always!
- Hudson Taylor, founder of CIM: “God isn’t looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow Him.” And when you follow Him, He will be with you!
- John Stott: “We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.” And never forget, a global God is everywhere and always with those who are on mission for Him.

Conclusion:

- 1) In the context of eschatological debates the wonderful N.T. scholar George E. Ladd, with great insight and wisdom, said to those who would become paralyzed by unnecessary squabbles, “If a relatively small minority of God’s people took this text seriously [Matt

24:14] and responded to its challenge, we could finish the task of worldwide evangelization in our own generation. God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who all the nations are. Only God knows the exact meaning of evangelize. He alone will know when that goal is fulfilled. But I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms; our responsibility is to complete the task. So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission.”

- 2) C.T. Studd, “If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”
- 3) As you depart my simple prayer for each of you is this: “The will of God: nothing less, nothing more, and nothing else!” Or as Nikolaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf (1700-60) said, “I have but one passion – it is Christ and Christ alone!”
- 4) Now, are you His disciple?!