

Matthew 28 ¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

One of the ways in which we are blessed as a church, is the high proportion of our congregation who help in so many ways in the life of the church: service-leaders, preachers, readers, pray-ers, singers, musicians, welcomers, coffee-makers, Kids club, creche, prayer ministry. Home group leaders, leadership team, PCC members, all the different PCC working group members, Living Nativity, puppets, etc etc etc. 2 dangers: 1. Those who don't feel they have anything to offer in these areas may be wondering how they can serve God. 2. Those who *are* involved in serving the church – maybe a little, maybe a lot – may be tempted to think “*Well that's my bit. That's my Christian service*” Now what we do for the church is incredibly important, because the church has the very important role of enabling our worship, nurturing our faith, deepening our understanding, and encouraging us through fellowship and support. But as we well know, most of the time we are not in church, nor are we with our fellow Christians. The purpose of this new series is to think about our life on the “frontline” and where that frontline for each of us is.

Your frontline is the place where you spend most or much of your time, where you meet people who don't know Jesus. It's the place God has called you, the place of possibility and potential. We may be old or young, healthy or infirm, employed or not – we still have a 'frontline'. A place God has put us.

So your Frontline could be the workplace, school, home or neighbourhood – but, wherever it is, it's the place where you are aware of people that God loves and of situations where God could use you to make a difference.

In our gospel reading Jesus says: ‘*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*’ Jesus is Lord and king of all in heaven and on earth. Viz: Lord's prayer: *Your **kingdom** come on earth as in heaven n.b. your **kingdom** come – not your **church** come.* ... God's kingdom pervades every part of the heavenly realm and His plan is that it should do the same here on earth. His kingdom is to come everywhere, into every situation, every part of every community. That means wherever we are, Jesus wants his kingdom to be established. How is Jesus going to do this? Well, amazingly, through his disciples – initially that rag-tag bunch, standing there on the mountain in Galilee, some of whom we are told “*doubted*”, who so often were of such *little faith*, who often got it so wrong. Jesus told these 11 disciples to make disciples – i.e. like them “*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” So now Jesus' kingdom is to come through us, *this* rag-tag bunch of disciples, here in Cholsey, who sometimes doubt, who sometimes are of little faith and who sometimes get it wrong.

2ndly Jesus sent the disciples to “*all nations.*” Now we often focus on this being about Jesus sending the disciples out into all the world, we think of Peter ending up Rome, Paul's great missionary journeys, Thomas in India, Christian's down through the ages taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. And some *are* called to do just that and we praise God for them. But “*all nations*” actually means “*all peoples*” and that includes not just people in the far-flung realms of the earth, but your neighbours, your colleagues, your friends, your family.

Last year I spoke to a college friend, Bob White who is now Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge. He helped set up the Faraday Institute, which organises lectures and debates on Christianity and science: 'I was trying to work out how to reach out to my "tribe"' i.e. his fellow scientists.

We think of Jesus often saying *Come and follow me.* But in fact he also often tells people he meets and saves to “*Go home*”.

To paralyzed man: "Get up, take your mat and go home"

Viz Legion who wanted to come with Jesus: "Go home to your family and tell them"

Jesus was telling these men that their home, their family was to be their frontline.

Again in **John 9** ⁶ *After saying this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.* ⁷ *'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam'.* *So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.* ⁸ *His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, 'Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?'*

We may well feel that we are not qualified to be missionaries, but often we are the *only* people God *has* to reach out to our neighbours, family member, colleagues or friends.

Matt 10:5,6 Jesus to his disciples *"Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."* i.e. *Go first to your own people, the people you know*

(viz: shape of Jesus' own ministry)

We might find the idea of our home, work-place, neighbourhood, tennis club, being our frontline, our mission-field, very daunting.

I am sure the first disciples did.

How on earth am I going to make my neighbour a disciple?!

How on earth am I going to teach them to obey Christ?!

Well, we shall be looking at that in greater detail in the weeks to come. But meanwhile, I want to draw your attention to the most wonderful promise that Jesus gives alongside his call to make disciples wherever we are. *"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* *"Surely"* – *Don't doubt it for a moment.* Wherever you are, day by day, hour by hour, Jesus says *I am with you.* Jesus might tell you to *Go* but you are still never on your own – He is always there right alongside you. And that means wherever you are, He is also alongside the people you are with. And Jesus longs for every one of those people to know him, to know his love, to have their eyes opened - far more than you do.

In the Lord's prayer, we also pray *Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.* Until quite recently I thought that just meant that just as in heaven the angels would carry out God's commands wholeheartedly, without question, quickly so should we carry out God's will. But a few months ago, as I was meditating on the Lord's prayer and this phrase in particular, I was reminded of Jesus saying in *John 5 v.19* *'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.'* Isn't this what *"Your will be done, on earth as in heaven"* means. It's perceiving God's will in heaven, and doing it here on earth. If you feel you can't do anything to share the gospel, much less make disciples – you are absolutely right! You can't! Even Jesus said he could *do nothing by himself... he can do only what he sees his Father doing.* And if he couldn't do anything, how much more is that true for you? But like Jesus we can do what the Father is doing and now He has given all authority and power in heaven and earth to Jesus, we can do what Jesus is doing.

We need to remember that heaven isn't *way beyond the blue* or in a galaxy far far away; heaven is where God is, where Christ is - and if Christ is always with us, that means heaven is all around us. It is, if you like, a dimension *'just around the corner'*, just beyond our sight. It permeates everywhere: your home, your school, your workplace, your street.

We also need to remember that wherever we are, Jesus is with us and to learn to see whoever we are with, or working for, or emailing to, or on the telephone to, through the eyes of Jesus. And we need to be alert to what Jesus wants to say to that person, or how he wants to show his love to that person. This is what it means to do God's will as in heaven. This is what each of us who is a follower of Jesus is called to do. And what a wonderfully exciting calling it is: Jesus is calling you alone to come with him to your particular frontline, to see what He is doing there, how He wants to share his love and build his kingdom in that particular situation, and then to work alongside him and under his instruction. Because if you are a Christian, then you have a unique frontline call.