

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
June 11, 2017

In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Spirit

Matthew 28:18-20

28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

28:19 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,

28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Today’s verses are often called “The Great Commission.” Some people may think that the commission was only given to missionaries, pastors, preachers, churches, and evangelical organizations. But, in fact, this commission was for all Christians. According to Matthew 28:19-20, it says, “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” He said, “Go,” to all of us believing in the Savior Jesus Christ. Contrary to His command, however, most of us will say, “How can I do that? It’s overwhelming for me.” Now, we might not be able to make other people His disciples, but we absolutely can become His disciple. Actually, this is the very first step for preparing the Great Commission making disciples of all nations.

It sounds like there are several commands, “Go,” “Make disciples,” “Baptize,” and “Teach.” But, in reality, there is one command; “Make disciples.” Others are in the participial form. These participles,

“going”, “baptizing” and “teaching.” shows the three steps for making disciples. We make disciples by “going with the Word of God”, by “baptizing people”, and by “teaching them.” At the same time, these are the steps to become disciples. Today, in the perspective of “becoming His disciple,” let us learn about the three steps for the Great Commission.

## **1. Listening to the Word**

Jesus taught the disciples to go with the Word of God in order to make disciples from people. Taking the viewpoint of “becoming disciples,” we could see the first step is accepting those who were sent to preach and listening to the Word of God. Not all people welcomed them and listened to the Word. Some of them were against and persecuted them. Today, people seemingly accept what we are talking about, and many people listen to us apparently, but they wouldn’t answer God’s Word and moreover, there is a “black hole” named “no interest” behind them. However, it is always true that His words are living and have the power to make people alive. Likewise the early disciples, we have to keep speaking and believing in the power of the Word.

Those who welcomed the speaker of the verses and accepted the words of God were saved and blessed. In Act 10, it describes Cornelius, the centurion of Roma. Here is a selection what he had done. When he received an order to invite Peter, he invited Peter. He also invited his relatives and friends in order that they might also listen to the Word of God from Peter. When Peter arrived to his home, he said, “...I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all

that you have been commanded by the Lord.” (10:33) They, Cornelius and his family and friends, were waiting for Peter to listen to the Word of God, and God blessed the people like them, listening to His words from the bottom of their hearts. Consequently, the very first step of becoming His disciple is to long for His words to listen carefully.

At Christian retreats, we sometimes invite a special speaker. He speaks at the main meetings, but yet local pastors still preach at other meetings. Once I saw a guest speaker who came every meeting in first, had a seat in the very front, and listened intently to other pastors. It was very touching for me. The guest speaker welcomed and listened to the Word anywhere, because he was appointed to speak His words. As well as the guest speaker, we shall do the same. Before “going and preaching,” we ourselves have to listen to His Word. Through listening to the Word of God, we will be changed to the disciples who will go out and speak the Word of God.

## **2. Being Baptized**

The second step is to be baptized. In the early church baptism means to have faith and to confess it. When those who listened to Peter’s preaching on the Pentecost day asked him, saying, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter answered them “Repent and be baptized ....” When we are baptized, we say, “I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and I trust in Him. I’ll follow and serve Him as my Lord.” We express our faith not only by words but also by the action that we immerse our whole body in water because our faith may become not an abstract or verbal one but it may work lively and visibly in our daily life.

We are baptized “by the name of the Father and of the Son and the

Holy Spirit.” This phrase mentions God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The word “name” should grammatically be in the plural form. But it is stated in the singular form. This says that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are One God in the Trinity. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit because the baptism is the confession of faith in God in the Trinity. In the early church the minister asked the baptismal candidates saying, “Do you believe in the Father?” “Do you believe in the Son?” and “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?” The candidates were baptized after they had answered, “Yes, I do.” to each of the questions. “The Apostles’ Creed” – the most oldest creed, is the one of the evidences of the faith and practice in the early church. “The Apostles’ Creed” was a lesson material for baptismal candidates. The candidates were taught the faith in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit before their baptism.

The same faith should be essential for the baptismal candidates even now. Our confession through baptism is not just to recognize that someone called “god” exists. We believe in the God Who is the Father of Jesus Christ. Since we know that we are sinful and we cannot go to God by ourselves, we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and trust in Him. We, sinners, cannot go to God without the Cross and the Resurrection of the Son of God. It is obvious in the Lord Jesus’ statement. He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) Moreover, since we know that we cannot trust in God and follow Christ by our own power only, we call for the help of the Holy Spirit and trust in Him.

Some may say, “We can go to God without Christ, and follow

Christ without the Holy Spirit.” Even they say, “We believe in Christ.” and “We believe in the Holy Spirit,” some of them are living without Christ and the Holy Spirit. However, the baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, requires us to believe in the God in the Trinity. The fact of Trinity is beyond our intellectual capacity. Because it points the unique essence of God. No one can understand it only by human logic. However, if you seriously want to become a disciple of Christ, you will realize that you cannot to be a disciple without the help of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit all together. Then, we should be led to the faith in the Trinity and know why you need to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. If you have been baptized, you’ll give thanks that you are connected to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and have the joy of being a disciple of Christ through the connection.

### **3. Learning from Christ**

The third step to become a disciple of Christ is to learn from Christ. Indeed, we have already received life from God when we believed in Jesus Christ. But this is the same as a baby resides in the mother’s womb. The believers officially start their life as God’s children with baptism. It is similar to a baby who has gotten oxygen and nutrition from mother through the placenta and starts breathing and digesting milk after birth. But even the believers become God’s children by baptism, they cannot be a disciple immediately. As a child receives affectionate care and discipline to grow as a human, those who are baptized would grow as a disciple of Christ as they learn from Christ.

“Learning from Christ” does not mean you just obtain knowledge of the Bible or Christianity. The Lord did not say “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” because He wants you to follow the church rules or tradition. It means you develop your own character and live a daily life and help others by learning spiritual things.

In a present education system, teachers come to the classroom to teach students. But in old days, pupils came to teacher and learned. This is exactly described in John 1:38, where two disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus “where are you staying?” Because “where are you staying” mean “Can I come to you and learn privately?” Jesus’ disciples live together with Jesus, went everywhere Jesus went, saw everything Jesus did, and listened to everything Jesus spoke. The disciples did not learn about Jesus, but learned Jesus Himself. The word “disciple” originally means a person who learn (or study) and this means to experience learning in an intimate master-disciple relationship.

This is a story when the Apostles Peter and John had a hearing before the Jewish Council. People were puzzled to see Peter and John who stayed calm the entire time when the highest authorities of Jewish Council questioned them. These law authorities looked down on Peter and John, saying “uneducated common men” but they admitted that they were with Jesus at the same time (Acts 4:13). Peter, John and other disciples did not receive the formal education, which was approved by the Jewish council, but they were with Jesus and learned from Jesus. They learned from Jesus who was the highest teacher, as well as from the Holy Spirit, who was same as Jesus;

therefore, the highest Jewish Council could not defeat the disciples. We would like to be the one who “is with Jesus” and “learn from Christ”. Those who learn from Christ are much better than any scholars and they can obtain the truth of life. They can comfort those who suffer and show a light of guidance to those who struggle without getting people’s attention.

I have learned a lot of things not only from famous scholars and their books, but also from my close friends. I have learned a lot from those who faithfully study the Bible, pray deeply, and dedicate their service to God behind the scenes. They show Christ not only by their words but also through their real attitudes. I am sure everyone has a similar experience. I would like to become be such people and become a true disciple of Christ. I believe “becoming disciples of Christ” is the way to respond to “the Great Commission” which is “to make disciples of all nations”.

### **(Prayer)**

Dear God the Father. I thank you that you saved those who believe in Your Son Jesus and helped them grow as the disciple of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Great Commission that Jesus gave us is Your will and can only be fulfilled through the Holy Spirit. God the Most Holy Trinity, help us become disciples of Christ and work for your will. We pray in the name of Christ.