



# Table Talk

Holy Trinity Sunday, A

June 7, 2020

**Matthew 28:16-20**  
**“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**  
**Vs. 18**



Some editor at a bible publishing house considered this paragraph and put a label on it: “The Great Commission.” The New Testament has five scenes like this. Scenes where Jesus “sends out” his disciples to be his witnesses. This one in Matthew has been elevated above the others because of its title, “Great Commission.” Its commands have inspired countless evangelism and discipleship programs, missions and ministries. Those verbs of vs. 19-20—Go! Make! Baptize! Teach!—grip our imagination. Thousands, maybe millions, have heard the Word of God and been baptized because of them. Thanks be to God!

Because our attention is so readily captivated, we miss vs 18. There Jesus makes a profound announcement, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” As with many of Jesus’ announcements, this is an exclusionary announcement. It functions like John 14:6 where Jesus announces that he is (and nothing else is) “the way, the truth, and the life.” Here, when Jesus says, “All authority,” that is exactly what he means: “ALL.” Heaven has been drained

of its authority. Earth has been emptied of its authority. Every authority in the entire creation has been given to and now resides in Jesus Christ. This claim is as exclusionary as it gets.

Angels have no authority. Demons have no authority. The Devil has no authority. Even in the Devil’s temptation of Jesus (Mt. 4:1-11), the authority he pretended to have was usurped from the Word of God. If none of these so-called “powers” have any authority... If heaven has no authority... If the world has no authority... Where do you get the “authority” to think you can refuse the commands of Jesus Christ? Think about it!

“All authority!” All authority belongs to Jesus Christ. Where do you get the authority to resist him? ... to refuse his commands? ... to say, “No, Jesus, you can’t be my savior?” Like all those so-called “powers” who must usurp authority from Jesus in their opposition to him, you too must usurp his authority. Every rebellion against the Word of God begins with a theft. Only robbers filching from Jesus’ authority refuse Jesus’ commands. Even before you can be disobedient to the Word of God, you must first be a robber and thief. When Jesus commands, “Repent! Believe!” (Mk. 1:15), where do you get the authority to even consider that you are not repented and might not believe?

Table Talk: Discuss what it would mean to live your life as if you had no authority while Jesus had it all.

Pray: Heavenly Father, grant that my salvation rests solely in the authority given to Jesus Christ. Amen

Written by Rev. Timothy J. Swenson  
Dean of Chapel for the Institute of Lutheran Theology

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## Matthew 28:16-20 English Standard Version (ESV)

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

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

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,

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



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