

Holiday Club Service

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Preacher: Joe Hall

[0:00] Wonderful. Well, as our final session of Holiday Club, we're going to open up Matthew's Gospel, where the kids have been all week long to the very end. Chapter 28, we're reading the last four verses.

So Matthew 28 from verse 16 to the end. It's page 835 of the Blue Church Bible. It'll also be up on the screen. Let's hear God's Word.

Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

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

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Amen. Well, boys and girls, it's been great seeing what you've been doing all week long at Holiday Club.

[1:33] You've competed, you've raced, you've clearly won medals and prizes, and that's fantastic. I don't know if there's a winner here, actually. It seems like a pretty, like, you know, even draw.

The last time I ran in a race, it was over ten years ago, and to be honest, it felt like winning just to get across the finish line. However you're feeling about this week past, maybe you're tired, your muscles are sore, feeling a bit puffed out.

Not just the leaders, the kids as well. You've reached the finish line. Well done. It's great. But what next? Holiday Club is finished for another year, but today we're standing at the start of another week.

This week is the start of another term, another school year. The summer is over, but it's the start of the rest of your life.

You guys have spent a week getting fit for a king. You've heard how he is a different kind of king. He didn't have a palace. He came to spend time with people that nobody else wanted to, to forgive sins, to die, give his life for his people and rise again.

[2:51] So what now? What now? Like me, are you going to waste your training, let it all go to pot?

Or are you going to keep going, keep training, keep running the race that King Jesus has set before you? We just heard from the end of one of the accounts of Jesus' life in the Bible, Matthew's Gospel, about some of Jesus' very last words on earth before he returned to heaven to rule and reign.

He's lived, he's died, he's risen again. But far from that being the end of the story, Jesus tells his followers, there's more. There's more.

In a sense, we could say it's the end of the Gospel, but the beginning of the spread of Jesus' kingdom across the entire world. Another book of the Bible, the book of Acts, the author Luke begins by telling us his first book, he told us what Jesus began to do and teach while he was on earth.

As if to say, the rest of the story is about what Jesus continued to do, continued to teach from his throne in heaven.

[4:11] Eleven men are told to make disciples of all nations. And I invite you this morning to look around. Two thousand years later, three thousand or something miles from Galilee, we sit here from many nations under more flags than I could count or even name, listening to and learning from this same king, Jesus.

That is an amazing thing. If you're wanting proof that this is all real, well, you're seeing it today. The story goes on. Jesus' kingdom is spreading.

So what now for us? What's next for you? Well, for a few moments, I'm going to point us to Jesus' last words in this Gospel. See what he says is next.

What does Jesus want for us now that you've seen and heard all about him, the king? Well, first of all, he calls his people to meet him.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. He wants them to be with him now that he's died for their sins and risen again.

[5:25] Now, these guys did not have the best track record, let's say. They had not run a good race. When Jesus was arrested, they ran from him.

When Jesus was on trial, one of his friends, Peter, denied ever having known him. When the women who followed Jesus told them that he was back from the dead, they thought that they were telling stories.

But King Jesus, fresh from his victory over sin and death, calls people like that to come and meet with him.

What brilliant news that is, that King Jesus, back from the dead, does not come to tell us, I told you so, or to punish them for their unbelief and their unfaithfulness, but instead, in grace, to show them the holes in his hands and feet where the nails had been, his side where the spear had pierced him, to announce his kingdom to them, and no less, send them out as his ambassadors, his royal representatives into the world.

Maybe you're here this morning and you're not so sure that Jesus wants you on his team. Maybe you're thinking, you know, that's fine for some people here, but, you know, Jesus just isn't really for me.

[6:51] I wouldn't fit in his team. Friends, if Jesus called these 11 guys to meet with him in his risen glory, forgave them, welcomed them, gave them work to do for him.

Well, there is no one who he would not call to come to him. There is no kind of person that King Jesus does not want on his team.

There is no track record too terrible for him. There's no such thing as stumbling once too many times for Jesus. He is the glorious, victorious Lord of all, and he calls us with all our stumbling, our faults, our failings, to come and meet with him in his risen glory.

It even says, when the 11 disciples saw Jesus, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Or more literally, they bowed down before him, but some hesitated.

You can almost see it, can't you? They all bowed down. Some of them are less sure. The Bible is so real. It's so true to life. If that's you this morning, you hear Jesus' invitation.

[8:07] You want to come, but you're not so sure. Know that King Jesus isn't trying to trick you, and he hasn't made a mistake. He calls you to bow down before him because he wants you with him in his kingdom, on his team.

But why should we come to him as our king? Why should we have Jesus as our Lord? Well, Jesus makes quite a claim in verse 18.

If you've got a Bible with your phone open, have a look there. What does he say in verse 18? Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

If anyone ever says to you, I just like to think of Jesus as a good teacher, a good idea is to point them here and say, yeah, and look what he taught. It is a stupendous claim.

It is so big, it's hard even to get our heads around, isn't it? Think for a minute about your own authority. For some of you who are maybe a bit younger, you might not feel like you're in charge of very much about your life, okay?

[9:22] But some of you who are a bit older, you might have authority in a sports team that you captain, or at work, a team that you lead, or a group that you lead. Mums and dads, you have authority at home over your children.

Some of you will have authority as church leaders, or maybe in local government, businesses, schools. But our authority is really very limited.

Our authority at work is limited to a certain group of people during work hours. Our authority at home is tested every day. Who's ever led something and hasn't hit their head up against the limits of their authority in one way or another?

At best, we have some authority over some things, some of the time. Now listen to Jesus again.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Jesus claims he has all authority over all things, all of the time.

[10:37] He is Lord of all, and he knows it. C.S. Lewis, who wrote the Narnia books that we've been thinking about in Legacy all week, said there are only three options when it comes to Jesus.

Either he is Lord, as he said, or else he is either a lunatic or a liar. His claim here is so big that it doesn't allow us a polite way through the middle.

A man who was merely a man, said C.S. Lewis, and said the sorts of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us.

He did not intend to. Friends, this morning, it is the Lord of all who is calling you to himself. He wants you on his team.

If you're not sure why Christians believe that he is Lord and not a liar or a lunatic, there are little gospels out on your way in that are for you, accounts of Jesus' life on your way out.

[11:38] You can take one with you. If you'd like to ask questions, get somebody to read it with you who invited you here, someone at your church who can study that with you. Find out why people actually believe that this claim is true.

Jesus is Lord. Because if there is even a possibility that it is true, that Jesus is Lord and King of heaven and earth, then none of us can afford to ignore it.

We all need to do something with it. See, it's because he has all authority in heaven and earth that he sends his disciples out to make disciples of all nations.

See, it's because he is Lord over the land and peoples of Canada that he wants disciples, followers of him in Canada.

It's because he is the Lord and King over Jamaica and Zambia and the Bahamas and all of these nations, Scotland and the UK and everything represented here and more, that he wants people in those places, from those nationalities, who speak those languages to be his people, to follow and worship him.

[12:52] Friends, whoever you are, wherever you're from, whatever kind of upbringing or background you have, race, ethnicity, language, culture, nationality, Jesus is Lord of all and so his kingdom is open wide to you.

Come to King Jesus, bow to him, have him as your king, your savior, and whoever you are, he will welcome you in as one of his dear children.

So if we can all do that, then the question is, well, how? How do I come in? Well, really handily, Jesus tells his disciples how to make disciples, which must mean then that this is how we become his disciples.

Now there are two things he says, make a disciple. Have a look again at verse 19 and 20 there, see if you can spot them. Jesus says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Baptizing and teaching. Now I thought this was a belter of a passage to have for a joint service until I saw the word baptizing.

[14:17] But then I look closer at what Jesus is saying and realize that actually therein lies the strength of our unity this morning. Because what Jesus says baptism means here could not be less divisive, but is the most wonderfully unifying reality that in Christ, we are brought into the one family of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We are baptized in his one name. Which is all the more striking because of who Jesus says is to be baptized, that is, disciples of all nations.

See what he's saying? Baptism says people from every family of the face of the earth can become part of God's one family through Jesus.

Now one thing I hope we can all agree on is that it is not the water of baptism itself that does that. It does not put you in God's family. No, it is what baptism points to that does.

After a wedding day, a bride might change her name. She takes the name of her new husband to show that she's united with him, one family with him.

[15:31] But she only does that on the back of the promises that they have made to each other on their wedding day. Not every bride takes the name of her husband, but no woman would ever take her boyfriend's name.

Why? Why? Well, because there are no promises in that relationship. And so in baptism, we take the name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because he has made promises to us in Christ.

Namely, that we, whatever family we're from, whatever part of the world, whatever upbringing we had, become part of his one family when we put our faith in his King, Jesus, our Lord.

And so baptism with water, however that has happened or hasn't happened for you, is the engagement ring or the wedding ring placed on our finger that symbolizes and confirms those promises to us.

And so whether you've been baptized or not, or in whatever church or tradition, the only way for us to become part of God's family is by believing his promise that when we put our trust in King Jesus, we're welcomed into his family and acting on that to put our own faith in King Jesus and not in ourselves or our families or our church or even our baptism or our upbringing or our good works to get us to God, but to trust in Jesus only to bring us to God.

[17:05] And God promises that when we do, we are adopted as children into his one family, sharing one name because we bow to one King, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who's over all and through all and in all.

That can be any of us today because Jesus calls people from all nations, every kind of person, to put their trust in him as their king to bring them to God.

And that is only the beginning because Jesus says to be a disciple or a follower of him also means being taught and living in obedience to him. See that verse 20, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Some of you may have already made a commitment to follow Jesus. That is wonderful. But Jesus doesn't just want a one-off commitment. He wants an ongoing, a lifelong commitment.

If the 11 disciples were to teach people to follow all Jesus commanded, does that not mean that we need to learn to follow all that Jesus commanded? And so if you became a Christian this week at Holiday Club or at Legacy, that is the best thing ever.

[18:32] But what next for you? Well, this is just the beginning, the first week of all the weeks of being a Christian in your life. So how can you keep learning and following Jesus now that Holiday Club and Legacy are finished?

Well, the best way is to join a church. You are here on the right Sunday because you have people here from at least three good churches that you can speak to about that.

Take a gospel, as I say, with you. Read it with somebody or on your own. What not to do is to forget all about this. Let your training go to waste and stop running the race.

If you have started with Jesus, keep going with Jesus. There will be hurdles. You will need help, support, training, teaching.

You will stumble. You will want to stop. You need to keep learning to keep following. We will always need to come back and unlearn old ways of thinking, relearn Jesus' commandments, be reminded of all he taught us.

[19:44] You're trying to follow Jesus without being taught. It's like trying to finish a marathon without any training, any support. The first few miles might feel okay, but we are not going to make it to the end under our own steam.

So friends, don't give up. Don't stop. Find a good church. Get a Bible. Be taught. Learn. Grow. It's a must for a follower of Jesus, says Jesus.

But how can we keep going with that for all the days, the weeks, and the months, the years that we can't see? We can't see the end of our lives.

We can't see around the next corner. How can I set off with Jesus or keep going with Jesus when I don't know what's coming? Well, finally, hear Jesus' words in verse 20, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

As we set out with Jesus now, we know that we are not going it alone because the one with all authority who calls us from all nations promises that he is with us always.

[21:01] In the school playground, at the school gate, on the football pitch, in the office, at the gym, round the dinner table, at your friend's house, wherever you're going to be this week, Jesus will be there with you if he is your king.

He has all authority over all things all of the time, and he uses all his authority for our good, our safety and protection, our blessing and our witness wherever we go.

So, back to our question, what next for you? Where do you go now? Friends, set out with Jesus and keep going with Jesus, trusting him and following him for all your days and weeks and months and years that are to come, and he will be with you.

And see you back next year for Holiday Club and Legacy 2027. Let's pray as we close.

Gracious Lord, we thank you for Jesus, that he is a king for all peoples and he calls us to come to him whoever we are and however we are. Help us, we pray, wherever we are with the Lord Jesus today to take a step closer to him in faith.

[22 : 31] Father, we thank you so much again for Holiday Club and Legacy, all of the witness, the work that went into it, each child and family and teen represented. We thank you for them, for the safety and fun they've had and that they have heard something about you.

Please bless them and let that seed take root and grow and bear fruit in their lives, we pray. Father, we pray for every family with kids going back to school this week and we ask that you'd be with them as you promise.

Go with them, Lord, into the classroom, into the school playground. Bless them and keep them, we pray. And Father, we thank you for each of our churches and the unity that we share in Jesus.

Thank you for our partnership in his work. We pray, Lord, that it would continue and prosper and grow in the years to come. Keep us, protect us and keep us going with you.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.