

# not a fan.

COMPLETELY.  
COMMITTED.  
FOLLOWER.

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 28.1-20  
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## I. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever experienced a moment in time where everything changed and you had a brand new perspective on life?

When was it? What happened? Does this experience still shape your day-to-day existence now?

## II. Introduction to this Study

This week, we conclude our Lenten series Not a Fan: Becoming Completely Committed Followers of Jesus (learn more at [gspc.org/not-a-fan](http://gspc.org/not-a-fan)). Remember, fans are great: They fill stadiums to cheer on their favorite sports teams, tune into award shows to applaud beloved actors and musicians, or stand in line for a popular author's latest book. But Jesus never calls us to be His fans, cheering from the sidelines, tuning in when "there's nothing better on," or getting involved when it's convenient. No, Jesus isn't looking for *fans* – He's calling *followers*, people who model their lives after His.

Our Lenten journey concludes in Matthew 28, with the life changing experience of Jesus' earliest followers. Their experience of the Resurrected Christ gave birth to the church, whose Spirit empowered these earliest disciples to be completely committed followers. God's Holy Spirit continues to lead and guide us, who on our own strength can only be fans. May we, by the same power that raised Jesus, continue to be and become His followers!

## III. Study the Text

- a. Recall the events of Holy Week by thinking through our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday gatherings, or better yet, by looking through the passages of the final week of Jesus' earthly life in one of the Gospel accounts.

What would be your mindset following these dramatic episodes?

- b. Read Matthew 28.1-10. The two Marys about whom we read are presumably Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and Mary Magdalene. Their travelling to the tomb early Sunday morning is most likely due to a desire to mourn and pray together.

You may be aware that of the fact that, in the first century, women were not trusted to testify in court cases. How profound, then, that Matthew is sure to communicate their continued faithfulness to Jesus, not only in journeying early Sunday morning to pray at the tomb, but during Jesus' crucifixion as well (see Matthew 27.55-56).

It may be difficult, but try to imagine Jesus' incarnation, life, death and resurrection occurring in present day, 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Who could be like these women, faithful to Jesus, but ostracized from society?

- c. Why do you think Matthew writes that the guards were "were so afraid of [the angel] that they shook and became like dead men"? Why is the angel's arrival so terrifying for them? And why do you think Matthew tells us they became like "dead men"? Is he having a little fun at their expense!? (remember who's "supposed to be" dead!)
- d. Notice that these women, the first recipients of this resurrection announcement, do not immediately see the Risen Jesus, but instead *hear* the good news from the angel, who gives them five commands: Do not fear, come, see, go, and tell (in verses 5-7). Think through each of these. How is each of these

dependent upon the previous instruction? For instance, why is it necessary that they “do not fear” before they are able to enter into the empty tomb (and so on)?

- e. In verse 7, the angel asserts, “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” What do you think the significance is of Jesus *going ahead* into Galilee?
- f. Verse 8 tells us that the women were “afraid yet filled with joy.” Have you ever had an experience like that? What was it? Why? How would you explain that feeling to someone who had never felt that way?
- g. Jesus’ commands are similar to the angel’s, though He has no need of saying “come” or “see,” as they have come and are seeing! But he does encourage these first disciples who have come and seen, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” Why do you think Jesus is so intent on reuniting with His male disciples after they had deserted Him?
- h. Read Matthew 28.11-15. Why do you think Matthew includes this aspect of the story?
- i. Read Matthew 28.16-20. In verse 17 we read, “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.” The Greek word for “doubted” might be better translated “were hesitant” or “were indecisive.” How do these words change the overall feel of the passage?

One commentator explains it this way: “It is natural to believe that the eleven disciples would have been in a state of hesitation and indecision. Too much had happened too fast for them to be able to assimilate it. They did not doubt that it was Jesus whom they saw and gladly worshiped. If their faith was too small in measure, that was because they were in a state of uncertainty about what the recent events meant and what might happen next.”

- j. Verses 18-20 are known as the Great Commission. Imagine you’re reading it for the first time: What do you find interesting about Jesus’ command? What about Jesus’ command reveals why He wanted His Twelve (now eleven) disciples there, too?

Notice that Jesus’ Great Commission flows from the authority God has given to Jesus. And that’s *all* authority! His disciples are to make disciples, in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them obey all of Jesus’ teachings, trusting that Jesus is with us until the end of the age.

Take some time to think and talk through the radical implications of these verses, engaging especially the underlined words above.

#### IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Are there ways in which you – like these women so long ago – have felt ostracized? How has the Risen Jesus met you in this midst of those feelings?
- b. Who have you heard the good news of Jesus’ resurrection from? How did they “not fear, come, see, go, and tell”?
- c. Have you ever felt hesitant or indecisive? How does Jesus’ interaction with and call upon the original twelve disciples help you reframe your hesitancy or indecisiveness?
- d. How have you responded to Jesus’ Great Commission? In other words, how have you “not feared, come, seen, gone, and told”? How and where could you continue to do so?

#### V. Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Pray for the ongoing life and mission of Good Shepherd, especially in this season of denominational discernment, that we would connect with God, grow in faith and serve in love;
- b. Lift up those who have not yet heard the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection in your neighborhood and around the world, asking God to inspire you to join Him in making disciples of all nations;
- c. Ask God to send His Spirit to lead us in worship this weekend, that we might be renewed and transformed to follow Him, not as fans, but as followers!