

# *Apprentices Of The Master* *- Confidence*

**Bible Reading:**  
*Matthew 28: 16-20*

*“All authority in heaven and on earth  
has been given to me.”*

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Brothers and sisters at Calvin -

Can we live with confidence in the full authority of Jesus?

He said -

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.....*

Having full authority.

What does it mean to believe that?

To live with confidence in that - what does it mean?

Brian McLaren, in his book *More Ready Than You Realize*, suggests three things:

1. It means that you believe that Jesus is alive.
2. It means that you believe that Jesus is who he says he is.
3. It means that you believe that Jesus is right in what he taught.

You believe these things.

You allow them to shape your life.

Someone has said that being a Christian is living as a life-long apprentice of Jesus. An apprentice is someone who learns to practice a trade from a master who is skilled in it, who knows what it is about and what it is for.

Jesus claims to be the authoritative master.

And invites us to be apprentices.

Can we believe that?

Can we allow that to shape our life?

Tonight as we consider the phrase - *all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me* - and as I ask whether we really believe it, consider with me, first -

What does it mean to use the word "believe"?

Notice the context of Jesus' statement of authority. The Bible tells us that the disciples gather. They see Jesus. And as He prepares to speak, two things happen.

1. **They worship** - they acknowledge his great worth, and are willing to submit themselves to that worth. They celebrate His worth in their lives. They bow before it. When He died, everything fell apart. Their worlds went black and caved in. Was there a formal liturgy - liturgy, hymns, readings, movement and the rest of the 9 yards? Of course not. At least nothing we're told about. But you'd sure have seen it on their faces. Their hearts would have been focused on him, not the weather for next week, or the score of last night's game, or whether the disciple next to them was wearing the right robe. Eyes riveted on Jesus. Full attention. Keenly aware that life had hope again. Honoring His enormous significance.  
They worship. That first.

And then, notice #2:

2. **But some doubted** - I am so grateful for and appreciative of the Bible's transparent honesty. It doesn't say that some tag along "wannabe" types doubted. Notice who the text speaks of! See it there? It's talking about that groomed, inner, key group of eleven - the ones that Jesus prepared to be the pillars of the church; the ones imaged in *Revelation 4:4* as 12 of the 24 elders seated on the 24 thrones around the great throne in heaven. These are the embryonic heart and soul of the Church. These are the ones with whom apostolic succession originates. Any authority that elders and deacons and pastors carry today by virtue of their ordination and laying on of hands began with the ordination given to these men.....

And some of them doubted!

As McLaren notes, having doubts does not disqualify you as a disciple. What it really means is that you are alive and aware. Acts 17:10-11 tells us about people in Berea. They were open to the Living Word, but they didn't take things at face value, either. They double checked the Scripture to make sure things being told them were true. Don't shut it out and reject it. Instead, they sit back. Evaluate. Make sure.

Here some among the 11 disciples weren't so ready to take things at face value. They wanted and needed to double check. to evaluate. To make sure things were really as they appeared. And that's doubt.

Doubt is not something to be ashamed of. And we don't have to run away from it - or scream with fear when we confront it in ourselves or another. Doubt, to paraphrase the bumper sticker, happens.

Here's the key with doubt - ***don't let it control you.***

If your mind begins to whisper, "*I'm not sure*" and you allow that to stop your investigation and searching and checking - problem! If doubts make you check out - problem!

***You can have doubts, but don't let your doubts have you!*** [McLaren]

Perhaps we don't have it all figured out. Hah! Who does? The longer I serve as pastor, the more I find myself saying, "*I don't know.*" The more I experience and study and contemplate and pray, the more I know that I don't know. I understand very little about the mystery of pain and suffering. The world and workings of angels and demons. About God's plan and working in our lives. The depths of God's patience and love for me.

I don't fully get it.

I don't see the full picture.

Like the pizza guy in San Diego some ten years ago. Apparently FBI agents conducted a raid of Southwood psychiatric hospital in San Diego, which was under investigation for medical insurance fraud. After hours of reviewing medical records, the agents had worked up an appetite. The agent in charge of the investigation called a nearby pizza parlor to order a quick dinner for his colleagues.

According to my source, the following telephone conversation actually took place:

Agent: Hello. I would like to order 19 large pizzas and 67 cans of soda.

Pizza Man: And where would you like them delivered?

Agent: We're over at the psychiatric hospital.

Pizza Man: The psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's right. I'm an FBI agent.

Pizza Man: You're an FBI agent?

Agent: That's correct. Just about everybody here is.

Pizza Man: And you're at the psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's correct. And make sure you don't go through the front doors. We have them locked. You will have to go around to the back to the service entrance to deliver the pizzas.

Pizza Man: And you say you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. How soon can you have them here?

Pizza Man: And everyone at the psychiatric hospital is an FBI agent?

Agent: That's right. We've been here all day and we're starving.

Pizza Man: How are you going to pay for all of this?

Agent: I have my checkbook right here.

Pizza Man: And you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. Everyone here is an FBI agent. Can you remember to bring the pizzas and sodas to the service entrance in the rear? We have the front doors locked.

Pizza Man: I don't think so.

\*\* Click \*\*

Guess what kind of a tip he missed out on – the pizza guy couldn't buy it because he didn't understand the full picture. It didn't seem real, because he couldn't see it all.

And He missed out.

I don't fully get it.

I don't see the full picture.

But I'm not going to let that paralyze me from getting on with the business of being a disciple. Of worshiping. Of serving. Of stepping out and following through on His words, "*all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*" I don't fully get it - but I'm still going to keep on serving as a believer and a pastor.

Like the disciples. Read the text carefully. It says that they worshiped. It doesn't say that **some** of them worshiped. **They** worshiped. All of them worshiped. And in the midst of that worship, there was a swirling element of doubt in some of them.

I don't get it - but I know that this is on the right track. So I'll go along, even if I haven't the foggiest idea of where it'll all end up.

I know that Jesus speaks the truth of God, even if I can't fully comprehend it all.

I surrender to the statement that He is the true Son of God, become human, He is the essence of Truth become flesh, Creator become created - even though I can't really explain it adequately.

I remain convinced that He has the reservoir of care and strength and hope for damaged people in a hopeless world, even though I can't explain the world of prayer, spiritual battles and divine answers.

So I will follow Him. I will teach His message. I will worship Him and seek to shape my life after His. I will point other people to Him. I will agitate for change in this world according to His agenda.

I'll join Him as an apprentice in His mission.

I'll bring along my beliefs..... and my doubts.

I'll bring along my hopes..... and my fears.

I'll bring along my understanding.... and my questions.

And submit them to the One who says,

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me....."*

Someone suggests that coming like this is the best way to come. Because it keeps us teachable.

- we don't have all the answers

- we have much to learn

- we are wrong more often than we probably realize.

It keeps us in our position as disciples, not know-it-all's. to be a disciple means to have the position of being a lifelong student of Jesus, a learner for life. [McLaren]

Many retailers in the city are in the process of doing inventory in preparation for the Christmas rush. May I invite you to join me in taking inventory of our spiritual well-being?

#### 1. *Do we have confidence in the full authority of Jesus?*

Notice - I'm not asking about the confidence you have in the authority of the Church. Matter of fact, that's one of the biggest spiritual soft spots in Canadian culture. I can't count any more how many folks I've run across that'll freely admit, *"I'm a spiritual person..... just not....."* and know what word they fit in?

*"I'm not..... **religious**."*

They've heard too much, or seen too much in what they term "organized religion." Perhaps they've experienced too much; they've been hurt.

One of the things we talked about at the last worship committee meeting was the possibility of holding a service early in the New Year - a service of healing and repentance for all the ways that we have hurt and been hurt within the boundaries of the organized Church. Would be helpful to receive feedback from some of you on that.

I'm asking us to consider this evening our confidence in the full authority of Jesus, not the Church.

Notice - I'm also not asking about the confidence that you have in your confidence. As McLaren puts it, "It's not about the **complete confidence** in the authority of Jesus, but rather **confidence** in the **complete** authority of Jesus."

There's a huge difference between the two.

A relationship with Jesus Christ is not dependent on how good my faith is, how strong, how resilient, how dependable, how pure.

It is all about the goodness, the strength, the resilience, the dependability, the purity of Jesus.

It's, as one person put it, all about Jesus.

Confident about Him.

That He is trustworthy.

That He cares.

Can we go with that, lean on that, in the week ahead?  
May I invite you to do so.

## 2. *Do we believe that He is alive?*

Do we really believe that what we speak of, and sing about, and go from here to live — that all this is about a person presently living, watching and dealing into our lives?

That this person whose presence is very real calls us into a mission, seeks to have us live and work as His apprentices?

That He is here.....

.....really

.....right here.

That's far more than following in the legacy left by our parents or grandparents..... or John Calvin and Martin Luther..... or the disciples.

It's about being participants, co-actors with the Son of God.

One of the best ways to see if we believe it is by how we act tomorrow morning. Perhaps tomorrow at lunch will be the time to ask this question again, "*Do I really believe that He is alive?*"

When I sat in the hallway with my classmates.

When I was alone in the computer lab cruising the Internet.

When I started my day - for if He's real, and alive, and with me, did I take time to start my day by acknowledging His presence and speaking with Him?

Today we're considering His claim to all authority.

That includes being alive.

There is no doubt about his death. History documents that. People can readily accept it.

The question is - now he is alive. That is the claim.

I've stood at many a death bed.

I've watched people make the transition from earth to heaven. Held their hand as they breathed their last.

It's an unbelievable space. Very sacred.

But also very sobering.

Because at that moment I realize, again and again, just how incredibly vulnerable I am. When death approaches, finally - nobody can stop it. Nobody. And once its clammy fingers have their grip around you, that's it.

Unless you are Jesus.

He slipped out of death's grip.

Matthew 28 records the words of a living man.

I serve a *risen* Saviour.

He's *in the world today*.

I *know* that He is living..... whatever people say.

Death is the last great enemy for humanity.

It is the enemy conquered by Jesus.

Meaning - that if we are in His care, there is no enemy that can conquer us.

We are safe.....

safe in the arms of Jesus.

Do we believe that?

Lay your head on your pillow in peace, my friend.

For you are safe!

## 3. As we continue our spiritual inventory.....

*Do we really believe that Jesus is who He says He is?*

The Saviour of the world.  
The Son of God.  
My Saviour.

All authority - the last word - goes to Him.

He holds the last card.

The one that plays out the final hand in my life.

The one that signals the final end of the game and the final day of history.

He holds it.

Do we really believe that?

That real, unimpeded, peace-giving, hope-restoring contact with God comes when we appeal to heaven via Jesus.....

Do we really believe that –

– That this is so for ourselves..... and for others?

Jesus gives a mission to those who seek to shape their lives and identity around Him.

He invites us to live as apprentices in His passionate purpose for the Church - to tell the world, and to reshape creation, with the good news project of Salvation and final victory in Christ.

That evil and despair, hunger and injustice, loneliness and pain -  
these dark ogres do NOT have the last Word.

Jesus does!

That's the truth.

You can take that to the bank.

4. And finally,

*Do we really believe that Jesus is right in what He taught?*

Again - I'm not asking you to put up your hand and declare that you understand, fully, everything that Jesus taught and did.

I'm not even asking you to say that you're fully with the program.

But this - can you say that, when push comes to shove, you'll find yourself biased in His direction, that the pull is His way,

that in times of uncertainty you'll allow yourself to fall in His direction?

That when He teaches that life is found through a relationship with Him, and life lived according to His principles

- remember what Pastor Jack preached about last Sunday morning! -

that we'll go with that.

And not just go with it ourselves.

For ultimately, I guess, there's the final test.

When we really believe in a product, we tell others about it.

If we buy a computer from Dell and are pleased, we'll forward other people to their web site. If we're happy with a Dodge Caravan, we send them to Al. Sold on wool and knitting projects - over to Theresa's. 'Cause we believe in what they do.

How much do we believe in Jesus and His mission to earth?

Enough to tell even one other person?

I'd like to invite you to have a moment of silence now.

And in that silence, as we bring our Sabbath day to a close,

perhaps you'd like to engage in reflection on Jesus and His authoritative claim on your life.