

Trinity Sunday 2011

Matt. 28:16-20 “The God of All -- All authority...All nations...All that I have commanded...I am with you always...”

First off, “Happy Father’s Day”. Everyone here has a father and we all know how important fathers are in our lives. We also know that we are blessed when fathers take their parenting role seriously. Making a living for ones family is important and a family is blessed by parents who are able to provide for their families. In times past this was the man’s responsibility but now days earning a living is often shared by both parents. But providing for ones family through a job done either by mom or dad is a means to an end, not the end in itself. To make your family your highest priority is the greatest gift you can give to your family. Being a parent is the most important, and in many cases, the most difficult job you will ever have. When you give your children your very best – being present in their lives, being consistent in your discipline, being faithful in your marriage, passing you your faith, your children will reap the benefit of a stable and loving home that will be a blessing to them as long as they live. And in return, your children will be a blessing in your life as you watch them grow into mature, responsible adults. May God bless you in your parenting giving you strength to meet the challenges of being a parent.

This is Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday of the long Pentecost season of the church year. We have celebrated the power of the resurrection of Jesus in the season of Easter, the glory of Ascension as Jesus returned to the Father and the birth of the church on Pentecost. We begin the season of Pentecost with the Great Commission text in Matthew’s gospel. The Spirit empowers the church for mission and ministry. Jesus gives us our marching orders and promises to be with us.

Read text again.... Matt. 28:16-20 “The God of All -- All authority...All nations...All that I have commanded...I am with you always...”

Our mission is the great commission...go to ALL nations, Teach ALL that Jesus has command. Whereas God has all power and authority, the text begins with a comment that reminds us that the church in this world is fallible and imperfect. Verse 16 begins, “Now the eleven disciples came to Galilee.” My favorite commentator on Matthew, Dr. Fredrick Dale Bruner writes, “The number “eleven” limps; it is not perfect like twelve....The church that Jesus sends into the world is fallible, “elevenish,” imperfect. Yet

Jesus uses exactly such a church to do his perfect work.” (F.D. Bruner, Matthew, Vol. 2, p. 1090). We may want the church to be powerful, perfect, glorious & successful in the eyes of the world and we’d like to think that we are perfect Christians. But Jesus calls us to be faithful & to follow Him even when we are imperfect, weak and less than successful in our discipleship. Perhaps the church is more vigorous when it limps. When the church is faithful first it does more good than when its success is based on a watered-down theology of accommodation with the values of the world. Jesus takes an imperfect church and gives it a perfect vocation and mission. That mission is to go into all the world with the message of Jesus.

The text says, “When the disciples saw him they worshiped him, though some doubted.” They “worshiped him”. This means that the disciples knew they were in the very presence of God. Jesus was more than just a great teacher or a miracle worker. He was God with us. He was divine Lord and Son of God. To worship God is to obey the first commandment... “I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.”

Worship is the first step toward fulfilling the great commission. In worship you learn about God in Christ Jesus. You receive the good news that your sins are forgiven and you get your marching orders for the week. The Holy Spirit may prompt you in worship to speak to someone close to you, to encourage them in faith, perhaps to inspire you to be a faithful witness to your children.

In witnessing the Ascension of Jesus, the disciples finally “got it”. They had been with Jesus, they had seen his miracles, they had heard his teaching, they witnessed his death and marveled at his resurrection. Now they worshiped him.

“When the disciples saw him they worshiped him, though some doubted.” But even with the miracles, the teaching, the resurrection, some doubted. That’s what I like about the Bible. It is so honest. It tells the truth. It also tells us that doubt is part of faith. The Christian life is lived between worship and doubt. (Bruner, p. 1093).

We come to church on Sunday and are filled with hope and joy in the presence of God. Then we go back into the work-a-day world and doubts creep back into our minds. “Where is God in natural disaster, war, economic uncertainty, family disruption?” It is okay to have doubts.

Doubts are like sneezing. If you sneeze it is a sign that you are still breathing. But it is a less than healthful sign. You don't want to become consumed with sneezing. The same with doubts. They are a sign of faith, but you wouldn't want to be consumed with doubt. Don't be afraid of your doubts. God is big enough to handle your doubts. God is not dethroned because of your doubts any more than the world is made flat by our inability to see the curvature of the earth.

Doubts may come and go but faith clings to the promises of God, not to our ability to know or be sure or always enjoy robust faith. Doubts will always be with us on this side of the resurrection on the last day. St. Paul said, “**We see as in a mirror, dimly.**” (I Cor. 13:12). The way to overcome doubts is to feed your faith. Come to church to worship and hear again God's powerful word to you, “Your sins are forgiven and so are your doubts.” In worship you feed your faith and in feeding faith with God's word and promises you strengthen your faith and your witness and your doubts diminish.

When Jesus had the disciples together for the last time he gave them the “Great Commission”. “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**” The word “all” is used 3 times and it is implied once in these verses. “All authority, all nations and all I have commanded.” It is implied in the name of God. All the names for God are given, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

“All authority” means that Jesus is in charge of heaven and earth. Knowing that, believing that, means we know who to believe and who to follow in this life. Jesus is the authority in life. His word is life, his word is truth, his word has authority, his word is what we cling to. The church gets into trouble when it starts listening to voices other than the voice of Jesus because he is the authority.

Jesus has this authority and he gives his church its marching orders. “**Go – make disciples**”. This is the work we have been given. The best witness is a simple statement of what you believe. You are not called to demolish all rational arguments against the existence of God. You are not called to storm the gates of empiricism, rationalism with high-sounding reason. No, you are

called to the faithful telling of the story of how Jesus has entered your life and then let the Holy Spirit give power to your words to convince and convert and create faith. We don't do the converting. Only God can do that. As we give witness God does the miracle of creating faith.

Christian mission is worldwide mission. But that mission begins at home in our families. Your greatest mission field is right at home, among your children and grandchildren. You can be a powerful witness in your family by intentionally talking about God with your children. Don't be afraid to read Bible stories to your children. Take time to answer their questions. Use every day as an opportunity to find some way to bring God into your conversation. Something like, "Isn't this a beautiful day! God is so good to us. We have eyes that can see the beauty of the earth...or ears to hear the birds singing the praise of God. The creation is full of the glory of God. Point your children to that and help them see it.

We plant the seed of faith in God and the Spirit of God makes it take root and grow.

Jesus says that his disciples are to baptize and teach. This is "word and sacrament" ministry. Baptizing is the entry point into the Christian faith. It is God's gracious gift to you making you his child forever. Teaching follows on quickly. We are to teach the things that Jesus taught. We do well to begin in scripture and to stay close to scripture in our teaching. We don't need to take on the "wisdom of the world" in order to feel "relevant". The church that seeks as its prime concern to be "relevant" to the world, will find itself chasing after the world to bless every form of behavior that the world adopts. (see Forde quote p. 166 in The Preached God, Lutheran Quarterly Books).

Finally, Jesus empowers his church to fulfill its calling by his promise to go with you. Jesus promises to lead and guide, support and encourage you in life and faith. You are not alone. His power and authority goes with you. He gives you wisdom and insight, power and patience to be effective witnesses to your family, friends, and neighbors. Jesus said, **"I will make you fishers of men."** (Matt. 4:19). His word has power that enables you to be what he calls you to be, to do what he calls you to do. Jesus promises this powerful guidance, protection, provision **"to the end of the world"**.

You are blessed to be called by Jesus. He is the world's savior, in him your sins are forgiven, he is your God, he is the way to eternal life. To the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be the glory forever and ever. Amen.