

Trinity Sunday

June 11, 2017

Matthew 28:16-20

GOSPEL: Matthew 28:16-20

After his resurrection, Jesus summons his remaining disciples and commissions them to baptize and teach all nations in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The holy gospel according to Matthew the 28th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

There are some themes running through our passages this morning. One of them is that of new beginnings. Genesis, after all, literally means "beginning." It is the beginning of the Bible. It tells of God doing a new thing in creating the earth, the skies, the moon and sun, creatures and humans. Creating out of God's goodness and love as the Spirit of God swept over the face of the waters bringing about new life. And then at the end of Matthew's gospel we see yet another new beginning. The resurrected Christ appears to the disciples for the first time, even amidst the doubts of some, and he commissions them. Sets them off on a new

journey as they are connected to his mission. God's mission. They are partners in the glorious relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is their future. What the church knows as *The Great Commission*, "to go therefore and make disciples and baptize them in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" is connected to what we could aptly deem *The Great Promise* (David Lose, *In the Meantime*) of "Remember, I am with you until the end of the age." This great promise is reiterated by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthian church as he writes, "the God of love and peace be with you." No matter what that young church may have been experiencing: struggles, challenges, fears and doubts their future hinges on the fact that God is present. God's love has given them life, meaning, and an identity.

These texts got me thinking about our future as a community together. It's easy to get caught up in the past or even the present and then not dream about what the future holds. What excites us about tomorrow, the next day, next week, or even year's down the road? What excites you about being a part of our community of faith? About being part of Christ's church? Perhaps, that is the theme the Holy Spirit is calling us to this Holy Trinity Sunday. What new beginning is the Triune God calling us to here at Bethany? What new seed might the Spirit be birthing in each of us to further Christ's mission here and in our

community? How is this amazing love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit active in our life and shaping our future?

Martin Luther is attributed as saying, “Even if I knew tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree today.” That logic seems kind of silly doesn’t it. Why spend time planting an apple tree if you knew you would never reap the fruit it would bear? Yet, perhaps this is the mindset we all need. One that even in the face of peril, death and destruction envisions a future. A mindset in which we don’t give in to doubt and despair but rather remain committed to our calling to plant seeds. To partner in God’s work. To trust that no matter what happens God has the power to bring life out of death. Even if we doubts and fears a new ministry effort sounds foolish or might fail. Or perhaps we, individually or as a community, think the Holy Spirit might be stirring in us some new way to utilize our particular gifts and talents but think it is just impossible, let us muster the courage and strength to plant our apple trees and trust in the power of the God of new beginnings to do with them what God wills.

Because our future rests solely in God’s future and God has proven to be a God at work in the world. A God who is able to take our limited resources and perform miracles. Genesis is an excellent example of this. Look at the verbs attributed to God: God created (3x), God swept, God said (9x), God saw (7x), God

separated, God called (4x), God made (3x), God set, God blessed (2x), God finished, God rested (2x). These verbs give expression to a God who is active and in relationship with all of creation. OK you say, but all those verbs are in the past tense and one even says, "God finished." But we know that is not the case. The risen Jesus is alive and comes to those first disciples. He tells them to "Go". There future is not to be one of idleness and constancy but rather is to be one of faith that is in motion. A new beginning and a future that is on the go just as their Savior and Lord has been since defeating death.

Our future is bright even if at times it seems bleak. Our future is not one of death but it is one of beginnings because that is who God is. So what do we do? Sit still. Live in fear of the unknown. Let past failures consume and constrain us from the mission of Christ we are joined to. No, we plant our apple tree with exuberance, anticipation, excitement, and joy as we relish living as people of light. People embraced by the arms of God's grace. People bathed in the waters of love, redemption, and new life. People joined to *The Great Commission* and confident in *The Great Promise* that the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit is with us each and every step of our journey together.