

Sermon: Trinity Sunday

The Rev. Kim Hoop

June 11, 2017

Year A

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"

This is know as the Great Commission and is quite a daunting, if not impossible directive that had been given to the eleven disciples. A commission is an assignment, command, or duty given to an individual or a group of people, where they are officially charged with a particular function.

My first commission as a nurse (a graduate nurse) was for work at a summer camp in the Blue Ridge mountains of West Virginia. Well, it soon became apparent that I had made a number of assumptions and had not asked enough questions at the job interview. After taking the position, I found out that there were no standing orders, no supplies, the incoming camp staff was not trained in first aid or CPR and, I was the only medical person for 45 miles. The camp had around 300 people including campers and staff. Needless to say our pre camp staff week was a busy one for me. Well, alls well that ends well and I had the best 2 summers of my entire career (yes, I went back the following summer).

And, we have all been commissioned at one time or another in our lives--things like a job description, school assignments and military deployments to name a few. But I dare to say that none of us have received the kind of assignment given to the disciples gathered that day on a mountain in Galilee.

Jesus had made it quite clear, on a number of occasions that He and the Father were one. You know, "whoever has seen me has seen the Father, and I am in the Father and the Father is in me" and ,Jesus now had been given authority over heaven and earth. The God of the House of Israel no longer belonged to the Jews alone, Jesus's message was not just a Jewish message, it was for all people. He is the God of all nations, which means the disciples were to take his message to foreigners and Gentiles, not just to other Jews. This was a universal mission and the inclusion of all people, was part of Gods plan.

Jesus was giving a huge task to a band of rather ragtag disciples. After all ,Thomas doubted Jesus, Peter had denied him and Judas (who was no longer present) had betrayed him. In addition, the reading goes on to say that the disciples worshipped him, but some doubted.

The reading does not specify what the disciples doubted, but one source suggested that the disciples may have doubted their ability to carry out what Jesus was commissioning them to do. However, they were not to worry.

The word disciple (from the Greek) means to make a learner, a student of sorts, one who has been taught and yet continues to learn. So Jesus was directing them to go forth and teach others what Jesus had taught them. And Jesus's primary command is to love, not only God but also our neighbors. To care for the poor, the homeless, the marginalized and the hungry. To care for the widows, the sick and to visit those in prison. By the words and examples of the disciples, what they taught, and how they lived their lives, they would make Jesus known to nations and peoples who have never heard of Christ, what Jesus stood for, how he lived and what he died for. Jesus wanted the eleven to make peoples and nations disciples, or students of Christ.

And Jesus doesn't just tell the disciples what to do, he equips them for the ministry. For it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus will make the disciples a new community able to go forth to all nations and carry out his commission.

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, and Jesus links himself to God and to the Holy Spirit, creating the three in one. The Holy Spirit is God, the spirit at work in the world and the church. The Holy Spirit dwells inside and outside of us and unites us not only to God but to one another. " Jesus assures the disciples that he will never leave them, he will be with them, but in a different way. Sort of like Mary Magdalene when she went to the tomb and found Jesus's body gone, but yet he was there and spoke to her while in another form."

Jesus also instructs the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Perhaps to differentiate this new type of baptism from that of John the Baptist who baptized only with water. This new baptism, is of course Trinitarian. And it was shared in our Lectionary group: the Trinity is a mystery to which we are all invited to experience and to invite others to do the same. And the three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are mentioned in other places in the Bible, The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity was not developed by the churches until the 4th and 5th centuries.

St Augustine explained the Trinity in a very simple way: A tree. The root is wood, the trunk is wood and the branches are wood: one substance, 3 entities." God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Or perhaps we could say: " God the creator, is also the Son who lived on earth, is also the Holy Spirit who lives in us and works thru all of us in the world."

In our second reading today, St Paul refers to the three entities (God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit) at the end of his letter to the Church at Corinth, and this is known as the Pauline Benediction and too, is Trinitarian. Paul was encouraging the believers in the Church at Corinth to reconcile with him and to reject the super apostles (not the eleven)

who were challenging his authority and teachings, and creating much discord in the Church. Paul was offering the Corinthians a much greater resource, encouraging them to look to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit to sustain the church during troubled times. Something just as important for all of us to do today.

Just as St Paul reached out to the Church in Corinth to gather, agree with one another, listen to his appeal, live in peace and basically get things back on track. Jesus too gathered his disciples on a mountain for the commissioning of a lifetime, enabled by the power of God. So Jesus's Great Commission, is it still pertinent for us today? You bet it is. Although not the original eleven, we are disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel message into the world by words and example, giving others the choice (as the HS never coerces) of following Christ and living out his ways on this journey we call life.

Remember, it is not only what we say but how we live our lives and treat others that really speaks volumes. St Francis once said: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and... if necessary... use words."

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