

**THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
TRINITY SUNDAY – FATHER’S DAY**

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Radcliff, Kentucky

**Matthew 28:16-20 – June 15, 2014**

**<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

One of the first things a young child who lives in the city learns as he rides in a car or walks down the street is the meaning of the electric signal. Red means stop, yellow means caution, and green means go. It seems so very simple but if one forgets what each means or if one reacts in the wrong way, the results can be tragic. Going through a red light, trying to beat the yellow light, or stopping suddenly when the light is green can result in a serious accident, yes, even death. Can you even imagine how a father might feel if he had the opportunity to teach his child this important rule but didn't do it and it resulted in an accident or even death?

This simple fact can illustrate the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and its importance. During his three years' of earthly ministry he sometimes put up the red light for his disciples. For example, on one occasion **“Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead”** (Mark 9:9). At other times the yellow caution light was lit. They could go out to preach and teach but only in certain areas, only to certain people, only with certain restrictions because Jesus said, **“My time has not yet come”** (John 2:4).

In the Gospel lesson for this morning we find the green light shining brightly. These words were spoken after Jesus' resurrection and just before his ascension back to heaven. Now, as the disciples went out to proclaim that gospel, as they fulfilled the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, there was not a red light, or even a yellow light, but a green light to go full-speed ahead, with the assurance of his abiding presence. This morning as we see that assurance offered to us once again, let us see that

**WE HAVE A GOD WHO CARES.**

**WE HAVE A GOD WHO CARES AND SHOWS IT WITH HIS DIVINE POWER.**

**OUR GOD HAS ABSOLUTE POWER.**

Jesus is God and while he was on earth he also had that absolute power but he did not always use it fully. During his earthly ministry he willingly subjected himself to the confines of earth's time and space. He did not “show off” or regularly display that power. Yet he always had that power and revealed it in his names, in his godly characteristics and by his divine miracles.

After his death on the cross Jesus once again began to use all of his powers. He showed that he possessed that divine power by his resurrection from the dead. He showed it by the way he could appear and disappear during those forty days between Easter and Ascension. Now, just before his Ascension he reminds them of his power when he says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

**WITH THAT DIVINE POWER JESUS AUTHORIZED HIS DISCIPLES TO ACT IN HIS NAME.**

We are those disciples today! We are the ones who are authorized to go out in the name of Jesus with his powerful and effective word. We are the ones who are to go forward in proclaiming the gospel in his name. We are the ones who are to do everything he says and he gives us the authority to do that!

Look at this example. Several years ago I had to go to the Russian embassy in New York City giving power of attorney to one of the missionaries to act in my name to carry out church business dealings in Russia. I did not go back to Russia myself, but I gave someone else the authority to act in my name. So also with Jesus. He is giving someone else the authority – the power of attorney if you will – to act in his name. And that someone is you and me!

**YES, OUR LORD IS EMPOWERING US TO ACT IN HIS NAME TO FULFILL GOD'S MISSION AND GOD'S ASSIGNMENT FOR THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL HERE ON EARTH.**

He is giving us even more power than a letter granting power of attorney could ever do. The work that our Lord entrusts upon us is not impossible because his power is behind it. It is he and he alone who enables us to succeed in that work. Yes, our God does care about us and what we do. And our God does care about how we do that work as we see in the words of our gospel for today.

## **WE HAVE A GOD WHO CARES AND SHOWS IT BY HIS SAVING PURPOSE.**

**OUR GOD IS INTERESTED IN OUR SOUL'S SALVATION.**

If someone gives us a position of power he trusts that it will be used in the right way. For example, nuclear power can be a boon to mankind and serve a good purpose for nations at peace. That same power can be used in a destructive way toward mass annihilation. Our Lord Jesus Christ has bestowed his power on us, his disciples. It is to be used for "peace," not for war. It is to be used to bring the spiritual peace of God to all nations.

**JESUS SAYS, "THEREFORE, GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS."**

The "therefore" here is very important. We are to be about the work of making disciples as a result of God's great power that has been given to us. This is the Lord's Great Commission to his church. Look what this tells us: It tells us we have a God who cares. It tells us we have a God who cares about our eternal destiny. It tells us we have a God who wants his message proclaimed to "all nations." It tells us we have a God who gave his one and only Son to this world as its Redeemer. It tells us that we have a God who has turned on the green light for us to be about his work.

Here was God's message of hope for a sinful world. Here was a message not limited to one nation or certain people. Here was a message that was for "**all nations.**" For all who were dead in their trespasses and sins. For all who were groping about in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. For all who were blind to the fact of their reconciliation with God. For all – young and old alike. Because he cares he says to us, "Make disciples" – Let's just do it!

**NOW THAT WE HAVE A CARING GOD WHO HAS COMMISSIONED US, HOW ARE WE GOING TO CARRY OUT THAT SAVING PURPOSE?**

He tells us that as well. He says, by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Our God instituted the Sacrament of Holy Baptism because he cares for "**all nations.**" Here is a God-given means of grace for all – even for the smallest child. Yes, even children are sinners because they are born with the inherited sin of their parents. If we were to exclude infants from Baptism we would not be carrying out his command to "**make disciples of ALL nations.**"

It is through Holy Baptism that we become God's children by faith. We are baptized in or into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Baptism the Triune God is active and effective and the God of our salvation. Look at how our Triune God works in giving us faith: God the Father is the source of our salvation. God the Son is the mediator between God and man who accomplished our salvation. God the Holy Spirit is the dispenser of that salvation. That is why this lesson is chosen for this Trinity Sunday. Here we see the work of all three persons of the Godhead.

In the first letter of Peter, chapter 3, verse 21, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter writes: "**Baptism...now saves you.**" In writing to Titus (3:5b) Paul says, "**He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**" Baptism works faith in our hearts – even in the heart of the youngest child. For remember, only faith saves. Jesus words in Mark tell us, (16:15) "**Whoever believes**

**and is baptized will be saved.”** Yes, we have a God who cares for us. He instituted Baptism as a means to make us his disciples!

Jesus goes on in our lesson to make clear to us that Baptism is not an end in itself but the beginning of being his disciple for life. Jesus continues and tells us that after Baptism we are to **“teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** To be and to remain a disciple of the Lord we also must teach all things the Lord says in his Word. In the case of adults who grow up not having been baptized we do that instruction before and after Baptism. In the case of children baptized as infants we do that instruction after Baptism. All through our lives we are to continue to grow in our faith and the use of God’s Word is God’s way of doing that.

We have a God who cares for our continued spiritual well-being. He wants us to be and to continue to remain as his disciples. Because we are his disciples we are rightly concerned about all that he says to us in his holy Word. Because we do not know all of the answers that “teaching” will be an ongoing thing. Just as the results of Baptism continue throughout our lives, so also the results of hearing and obeying God’s Word will continue throughout our lives. Because our Lord is teaching us through his Word our doubts are removed and we worship him as our living Lord and Savior – a Lord and Savior who cares.

### **WE HAVE A GOD WHO CARES AND SHOWS IT WITH HIS ABIDING PRESENCE.**

LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS. **“AND SURELY I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE VERY END OF THE AGE.”**

As we study the Bible we see his faithfulness to the eleven disciples. He told them to wait in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit would come upon them. And it happened – just as he said – ten days after his Ascension. As the disciples went out in his name he blessed the early church through them. Three thousand were brought to faith and baptized on the day of Pentecost. That number soon increased to five thousand. The Holy Spirit led them and blessed them as they brought the gospel to the Mediterranean world. In the midst of persecution the Lord was with them and blessed them because he did care for them.

We still have a God who cares for us today and shows us his faithfulness. He follows us wherever we go. He works with us in the work he has given us to do. He protects us as we work in his name. And he does this every day, all through our lives and will continue to do so until the very end.

LOOK AT WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU AND IS STILL DOING FOR YOU TODAY.

He has made you his disciple through faith in Holy Baptism. He has made you and keeps you as his child through his Holy Word. He has forgiven you all your sins. He invites you to come to his Altar for his very body and blood for the personal assurance of your sins. He assures you of his abiding presence whatever happens in this world. He strengthens you in the difficult times of life. He helps you understand the setbacks of life. He rejoices with you in the joys of life.

LOOK AT WHAT THE LORD IS DOING FOR FATHERS.

If you are a father God has blessed you with a child or children. With that blessing he places responsibility. You are responsible for your family, for your children and their physical and emotional welfare. You are especially responsible as the head of the house for their spiritual welfare. Studies have shown that while a mother usually spends more time with the children, the father’s example of faith is far more important in the lives of their children than that of the mother. But remember, all parents, mother and father, you are never alone in carrying out that responsibility. Both of you, individually and together, have your Lord with you at all times as you carry out that awesome responsibility.

Conclusion: Our Lord does all of this because he is a Triune God who cares. He cares for you now and he wants you to be with him in heaven forever. God grant that to each of us and to all of us! Amen.