

## Go and Make Disciples of All Nations

### I. By baptizing

### II. By teaching

*<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.”*

Near the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry his disciples asked their Teacher him about the signs that would indicate the end of time was near. In Matthew chapter 24 Jesus told his disciples that earthquakes, famines, wars, false prophets, the love of most growing cold would be evidence that Judgment Day was imminent. If you listened to the news this past week, it is apparent that Christ will come any day; 50,000 dead in China from an earthquake, tornados ripping through the southern states, fighting all over the globe, a cyclone that has left 128,000 dead. We see the love of most growing cold in that situation. While the military government claims that its own cyclone relief is moving along swiftly, the junta (leader) of Myanmar is not allowing foreign countries to bring his people food, medical supplies and water, and there are reports that over 2.5 million have been left destitute. We do not understand this. How could someone be so cruel to their own people? When we search scripture it gives us a clear answer: sin is the ultimate cause, which breeds selfishness, self-seeking power and an attitude that is too proud to accept help.

Today we are celebrating Trinity Sunday. The doctrine of the Trinity is not one we can really explain. It’s hard to comprehend. But when we search scripture it gives us a clear answer as to who God is. Scripture reveals that there is only One True Living God among the many so called “gods” in this world. Although he is the only One True God, there is a plurality about him. Scripture reveals that there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are coequal in power, in honor and glory, who work together as one being; yet they are not three gods but one God. Scripture also reveals to us that God is spirit. But when you mix in the doctrine of the incarnation, God the Father rejecting God the Son on the cross and the God-Man dying your mind goes berserk. Our finite, sinful, weak minds cannot begin to comprehend it. Scripture shares with us what we need to know. We bow in awe and humility and believe it by faith. As we further search Scripture, we learn more characteristics about God. Unlike the rulers of this world our Almighty Creator is concerned about all of his creatures, especially the crown of his creation. This morning in our lesson we will see that all three persons of the Trinity take an active role in the salvation of humankind.

After Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, the angels at the tomb instructed his disciples to leave Jerusalem and go north to Galilee. There the Risen Lord would meet them. Jesus himself appeared to his disciples after his resurrection and told them to meet him on a specific mountain in Galilee. Sometime after this account, Jesus and his disciples would meet on the Mount of Olives, outside of Jerusalem, where he would ascend into heaven. But it is on this mountain in Galilee that Jesus gives the 11 disciples his last will and testament (remember that Judas Iscariot had committed suicide). **“Go and make disciples of all nations.”**

That’s a tall order. Imagine your high school algebra teacher saying to you at the end of your senior year, “Now, go and share what you’ve learned with all of Kentucky.” You might ask, “What gives you the authority to make this demand? That’s a lot of work!” Before Jesus gave his command he prefaced it by saying, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** Did you ever play king of mountain when you were a kid? In the winter time all the children of the neighborhood would gather at the big pile of snow that had been built up by the snowplow. The object of the game was to be the last one

standing at the top, after you pushed all your friends to the bottom. Jesus had every right to say he had all authority. He was king of the mountain. But he didn't merely push his enemies to the bottom, he completely trounced them. He destroyed his enemies sin, death and Satan by his life, death and resurrection. The King of kings could rightly say, "Since I have all authority in heaven and on earth, I'm telling you to do this: Go and make disciples. Do not discriminate. Go to all nations. Go to every country, language, age, gender, skin color."

We understand in these two words, *all nations*, that the Great Commission was not just for the 11 who were summoned to that mountain in Galilee. Christ's command extends to the ends of the earth. And the disciples are dead. They can no longer carry out this command. We, too, are the ones who stand on that mountain in Galilee, shoulder to shoulder with the disciples, and with all the saints from that time on and into the future, as the great army of Christian soldiers, ready to march off to war against Satan, with our weapons drawn for battle, eager to carry out our Commander in Chief's orders. But Christ did not deploy his soldiers with special armor plated Hummvees, Kevlar, and a 5.56mm rifle. He commanded you to go and make disciples and he gives you effective and powerful tools to do so...

When we look at how this sentence is structured in the original Greek language, a better translation might be, "**Make disciples by baptizing and by teaching.**" Jesus gives you the powerful tools of baptism and his Word to make disciples for him. First of all: Baptism. What is it? The word *baptize* in the Greek language has the simple meaning: to wash with water. Jesus in this his Great Commission adds something special to the washing with water, "**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**" What does that mean, to baptize in the name of? Allowing Scripture to interpret itself we look at Romans 6:3, "**All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.**" All who are baptized in the name of the Triune God receive everything that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has done. It is the Triune God, then, who is the effective agent in baptism, not the individual. God communicates his blessings through baptism.

Baptized into the name of the Father... the Father is the one who created all creatures and preserves them. He provided the plan to save all humankind and carried it out. He provided the plan to save you. He sent his Son. Baptized into the name of the Son... the Son left his throne on high and came down to earth and took on human flesh. While on earth he lived the sin-free life that his Father demands of all people. He took the punishment the world deserved for its sins; death. He later rose from the tomb to destroy death's power. He provided forgiveness and eternal life in heaven for all people. And now the Holy Spirit makes that gift yours personally. The Spirit is the one who uses this means of grace to make you a child of your Heavenly Father. The Spirit works through baptism to create faith in your heart. Through baptism faith receives Christ's life, death and resurrection as if it were yours and so you are brought to believe. Through baptism you know with certainty that forgiveness and life eternal are yours.

Other passages confirm Christ's command that baptism creates disciples. 1Peter 3:21, "**Baptism now saves you.**" Ephesians 5:26, "**Christ cleansed the Church through the washing with water through the Word.**" The name of our Triune God attached to plain, simple water, provides wonderful blessings for all who are baptized. You have been made a disciple through baptism. Christ now commissions you to do the same.

Many of you have already carried out Christ's command. Maybe you have not personally poured water on someone's forehead, but as a parent or grandparent you brought your child to the baptismal font, knowing their wretched state, that from birth they are condemned and spiritually dead in God's sight (Ps 51:5, John 3:6), believing Christ's promise that baptism has the power to save, believing his Word that babies and little children can have faith (Luke 18:15ff; Matt 19:13ff), and so you brought them forward and made a disciple of Christ through holy baptism. Continue to carry out Christ's command. Express the importance of baptism with a friend or a family member who is unchurched. Continue making disciples by baptizing.

I said before that the Holy Spirit plants the seed of faith through baptism. Today I want you to go home and plant some seeds in a pot. And I want you to put that pot in your closet and shut the door. In September I want you to take that pot out again. Would you expect it to have grown? Not at all! That plant needs sun and water. Then it will grow and produce fruit. It will remain healthy and strong. Baptism plants the seed of faith. What naturally baptism then is teaching or instruction in the Word of God, as Christ said, **“Go and make disciples by baptizing and by teaching them.”** The Word of God causes that seed of faith to grow and be healthy. The verb tense that Jesus uses in the Greek language indicates continuing action, keep teaching, continue instructing them in **everything I have commanded you**; all of God’s Word. Faith cannot grow or be strengthened apart from the Means of Grace, the Gospel in God’s Word and the Sacraments, baptism and Lord’s Supper. Faith, if shut up and put in a closet, will die. This is why we offer this service on Sunday morning and why we will be offering this same service on Wednesday evenings during the summer, so that those who cannot attend on Sunday can be fed during the week. This is why we aren’t taking a break from Adult Bible Class this summer but having our 19 minute Bible studies. This is why we offer Sunday school for our children. This is why we offer the Lord’s Supper a minimum of twice a month. This is why we have a devotion before every voters’ and council meeting, so that you have opportunity to be fed by God’s Word and his Sacraments. This is why I have stressed the importance of your faithfulness in attendance in worship and Bible study the past few months. Not so that we can brag about increasing numbers of warm bodies in these chairs, but so that you can be strengthened by the number of souls who are maturing in their Christian faith with you, so that you can equip yourself to go and make disciples by teaching them the Word that you were taught here. With God’s Word at your side, you have a powerful weapon.

Let’s say that all of us were called up to active duty and deployed to Afghanistan. I was your platoon commander. I ordered you to take out a handful of insurgents camped out in a cave. But before you went out into the field I took away your M16 and grenade launcher and gave you a knife and taser gun instead and said, “Go, accomplish your mission.” These are not the powerful weapons you would need to complete your objective. Jesus tells you to go and make disciples. He gives you a powerful weapon. In Romans 1:16 Paul says, **“I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”** God’s Word has the power to make disciples. Later in Romans 10:17 Paul says, **“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.”** This is why it is so vital that you bring your unchurched friends to our congregation, so that they hear the Word, so that the Holy Spirit can work through the Word. Again, we see our Triune God taking an active interest in the salvation of sinners, **“God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. He called you to this through our gospel.”** (2Thes 2:13,14) The Father chooses to send his Holy Spirit to whom he wants, to work through the spoken Word of the gospel, the good news of Christ crucified. Give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to do his work. Make disciples by teaching them.

The cruelty of this world is hard to understand. We cannot comprehend how a nation would displace thousands of its citizens to make room for summer Olympic facilities. We may not understand how a Triune God is possible, three persons in one God, but we do know that he shows great concern about his creation, and provided salvation for all of humankind. And now he gives the authority to you, to share that salvation with all nations, and he has graciously provided you with the means to carry out that mission, by baptizing and teaching. Therefore, my dear friends, go. Amen.