

Holy Trinity – June 7, 2020
Text: Matthew 28:16-20
Theme: The Mission

We all grew up calling our Gospel for today “The Great Commission.” But those words, the great commission,” are found nowhere in Scripture. We call it that because Jesus is setting his disciples to work just before he ascends into Heaven. Because the Church has always borrowed language from the military, someone, somewhere decided that Jesus was commissioning his officers, the first pastors of the Church.

He called them together and told them to do two things: baptize and teach. That is what a pastor was commissioned to do then, and that is still what a pastor is commissioned to do. Everything we are to be doing is centered in that commission. So should a pastor be involved in setting and administering the congregational budget? Only so far as it impacts baptizing and teaching. Should a pastor be involved in servicing the boiler? Only so far as it impacts baptizing and teaching. One of the fundamental problems in the Church today is that too many pastors are doing all kinds of activities that have little or nothing to do with baptizing and teaching. But the same can be said for parishioners.

Why do you do whatever you do? We have all kinds of people doing all kinds of jobs at Trinity and Holy Spirit. Some of you get a

paycheck for what you do. Some of you volunteer your time. Some of you are caring for families. Some of you have only yourself to care for. Whatever you do, you have the same commission as I do. Go make disciples by bringing people under the name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How do you do that? You bring them to the church to be baptized and you teach them everything Jesus has taught you. Wow! It turns out that it is a great deal easier being a Christian than most people think right?

Our job is not to live a perfect and holy life. The better you keep God's Law, the more blessings God will pour out on you but living perfectly and holy is not your commission. Neither is our job to correct everyone else who is sinning. We are not the sin Gestapo. If you are able to lovingly help your fellow Christian to see and repent of his sins; that is great! It will help strengthen his faith when he lives according to the 10 Commandments and it will benefit the Church and society as well. But your commission is not to police others. Your commission is to bring people who are *outside* the family *inside* the family, and to bring sheep who have wandered away back to green pastures and still waters.

On this Trinity Sunday, it is a good day to remember what our commission is. Watch how the Holy Trinity works in conversion. Baptize in the name of the one who created you, the Father; the one

who redeemed you, the Son; and the one who continues empowering you to live in this sinful world, the Holy Spirit. You are placed into the name of the triune God and once you have the same name as the Holy Trinity, you are all set to learn how to use that name and the power that comes with it. So next we teach them everything Jesus has taught us about his Father who created them, about Jesus who redeemed them by dying on the cross in their place and suffering Hell for them, and about the Holy Spirit who gathers them together in worship and study where they will be enlightened and made holy. Then they can join all of us and head back out to find people to bring back here for baptism and teaching.

It is a simple process that works. The danger, as often is the case, is getting distracted by Satan. He wants to distract us and occupy us so that we are not paying attention to completing our commission. Black lives matter like all lives matter. Police brutality is not to be tolerated in a Christian nation. People get sick from viruses and sometimes they die. Looters, vandals and thugs use tense times to carry out the property destruction, theft and anarchy on which they thrive. All of these problems are rooted in sin. The challenge for us is to address them with our Great Commission and not allow them to distract us from our work.

All lives matter. The value of all human life is found in what God was willing to pay for our lives, the very life and soul of his own son. Brutality of all types is addressed in the 5th Commandment where we are called to be of help and support to our neighbor and his nationality, ethnicity or culture is of no matter. The impact on us by various disease as well as looting and vandalism is addressed by the 7th Commandment where we are called to be good stewards of all we have and of all our neighbors have, including our most valuable asset which is life. All gifts are given by the Father to use in carrying out our commission.

It all relates, but we have to keep it all in the right order. God always runs the verbs. He gives everything. We manage his gifts. Every decision we make is based on that model. Am I managing the gifts well in order to draw people to God for Holy Baptism and teaching so that they can be empowered to draw others to God for Holy Baptism and teaching? This is why we do everything we do.

In the coming weeks, as we continue to be assaulted by a million distractions, don't get drawn into silly arguments about whose lives matter, whether or not a virus is dangerous, or what some politician's motives are. Those are silly arguments with answers that are either obvious from the Scriptures or unknowable by limited human minds. Rise above the silly arguments. Rise

above the attacks on people's character and motive. Rise above fear and worry over all of Satan's distractions and focus on fulfilling your commission.

I've heard a great deal about "white privilege" this past week. Stop focusing on sinful racial privileges that are granted in a fallen world, and focus on your real privilege. Regardless of whether we are white, brown or black, we are all indeed very privileged people. We are privileged people, not because we are of any particular ethnicity, nationality or culture and not even because we are Lutheran. We are privileged people because for whatever reason, and not because of us, God chose to pull us out of the sinful, damned fray and baptize us into His name. Now, to him to whom much is given, much is expected. Don't wallow in self-absorbed guilt over being privileged! Rejoice that you are privileged and use your privileged position to serve God. Seek out the lost. Seek out the erring. Seek out those who need Jesus and bring them home so that after this fallen world is finally dead, they can live in paradise with us for all eternity. Don't hoard the privileged. Share it. That's the mission of your commission.